

THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE,
IN

Divers of its Branches,
Described and Recommended.

In Four Parts.

BEING
The substance of several Discourses
ON

PHILIPPIANS iv. from the 4th to the 7th
verse inclusive.

To which is added,

A serious exhortation to prayer; in two
Sermons on 1 *Thess.* v. 17.

By BENJAMIN WALLIN. *K*

*Only let your conversation be as it becometh the
Gospel of Christ. Philip. i. 27.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for AARON WARD, at the *King's-Arms*, in
Little Britain. 1746.

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

Described and Recommended.
Parts of its Branches.

In Four Parts.



The Collection of

Printed in the year 1840 to the 25th
volume inclusive.

To which is added
A large exhibition to prayer, in two
columns on 18th. v. 17.

By BENJAMIN WALLIS.

Only for your reference as in it is printed the
Gospel of St. Philip. 1. 27.

LONDON:
Printed for Aaron Ward, at the King's Arms, in
this Palace. 1840.

TO THE
Church of CHRIST,
MEETING
Near the *Maze-Pond*, *Southwark*;

WITH
All those who stately attend the
worship of God in that Place.

My dear Friends,

THEY who know any thing of the power of religion, and have been conversant with the pleasures of social worship, need not be informed, that an improvement in Christian affection and friendship is one of the happy fruits of an engagement in the same religious society, and our frequent uniting in the same acts of devotion.

If the manifestation of the divine presence and glory rendered the *Tabernacles* of old *amiable* to the faithful *Israelites*, surely the more clear and gracious discove-

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ries God is pleased to make of himself, under the happier dispensation of the New Testament, must needs most affectionately endear those persons to us, who assist in keeping up the assemblies in which these superior privileges are enjoy'd; and, if *David* justly esteemed those who went with him to the house of God among his choicest *companions*, certainly this spiritual friendship must be warmly felt, where the word and ordinances of the evangelical dispensation we are under become effectual to raise our hearts to God; and our esteem for each other ought to advance in proportion to our fellowship with him. When *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts*, this disposition is experienced by Christians of every rank; ministers and people mutually partake of it, and, I am apt to think, few believers, if any, on reflection, are without a witness in their own breasts, that each fellow Saint has been, at one time or other, the object of their delight, either as a seal of their usefulness, or an instrument of their edification.

Among you of this church, I have had the advantage of hearing the word of God
from

DEDICATION. ▽

from my infancy; and with many of you in particular, I have continued to attend the service of the sanctuary, without any considerable interruption, to the present time; this is owing to the near relation I stood in to that excellent person, who was for many years your beloved and successful pastor, and whose memory is still precious, not only to you, but to many of the churches of *Christ*. Under his judicious and affectionate instructions, both as a parent and a minister, I continued a long time a melancholly instance of the insufficiency of the best of means, without a special blessing: But I trust, before his mournful removal, it pleased God, who is rich in mercy, to open the eyes of my understanding, and to change what was before only the form into the power of Godliness; after this I made a free choice of you as the temple in which I would pay my vows, and offer up the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, as well as seek my future spiritual improvement.

Your repeated and earnest solicitations to that sacred service, in which I am now engaged among you, I complied with, after

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many fore conflicts, and in the prospect of great difficulties, under a conviction that it seem'd to be his will, who has an undoubted right to dispose of us at his pleasure, and who has been accustomed to set off his own power, by the weakness of the instruments he uses. My trials and supports in the exercise of this office have hitherto answered, or rather exceeded my expectations; and I hope, I can sincerely bless God for both. I am every day more and more convinced of my insufficiency for so important a charge, and yet I am abundantly satisfied in the method God has taken to bring me into that work, which I had (as some of you know) for many years industriously avoided, and think it my great honour to be called into such service, though I shall never appear worthy of it.

It will, I trust, always be the chief end of my life and labours, next to God's glory and my own salvation, to seek your spiritual and eternal advantage, and, were my abilities equal to my affection, I should not come *a whit behind* the most eminent servants of God in these endeavours. For *God is my record, how greatly I long af-*
ter

DEDICATION. vii

ter you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ, striving night and day after your edification.

I am not indeed without an earnest desire to be more extensively useful, and am truly sensible that any acceptance of my occasional services among others is an undeserved favour; but my greatest concern is to be held in your esteem, who are, by divine permission, and your own choice, my care in the Lord, that so the truth delivered by me may be received in love to your great spiritual profit. While you stand fast in the Lord, and maintain truth, purity and brotherly love, I can have no greater honour than to serve you, and, as your zeal and fruitfulness abound, so will my pleasure in that service.

And as I heartily wish and pray that all other Christians who occasionally attend among us, may daily increase in divine light, love and holiness; so I would take leave to add my sincere and ardent desires, that those of them, who, though they have tasted of the grace of God, yet live out of church fellowship, (for I am persuaded some such there are) were delivered from those preju-

viii DEDICATION.

dices which hinder their compliance with their known duty, that so they might no longer keep themselves separate here from those with whom they expect a blessed and everlasting communion in the world above. This unhappy neglect will appear no trifling matter in the views of eternity, and when they come to realize their approach before him who has solemnly charged it on all his Disciples, not to be ashamed to separate themselves from the world, but to submit to his appointments, to unite themselves to his flock, and thus to *confess him before men*.

But have I not reason to be jealous of many, especially young persons who stately join our assemblies, that they are to be ranked among such who are the *forgetful bearers* of God's word? To you I would in a particular manner address myself, and I hope you will not be offended with my taking this opportunity faithfully to admonish you. I am fearful, that, as you have not discovered the evidences of a saving change, you are strangers indeed to any hearty concern about your eternal welfare. Do not many of you content yourselves with attending the publick worship of God, under
the

DEDICATION. ix

the influence of your superiors, or from some other motive below that of desiring the saving knowledge of Christ? Is not the word of God, to many of you, at best, but as a *lovely song*? Let me intreat such to consider what they are trifling with, even that which is of everlasting importance. A neglect of the means of grace, if not repented of, will certainly and suddenly be attended with the most dreadful consequence, which our * Lord sets forth, by the *wrath of the King* against those who *made light* of his invitation to the supper which he had provided. I heartily wish you had the same compassion for yourselves, which I sometimes feel in my own soul for you. Sure I am, you could not rest satisfied, if you saw yourselves in that dangerous condition in which I behold you, by the light of scripture, and my own past experience. It is the joy of such who have felt the power of divine grace among us, to see you willingly come under the sound of the Gospel, and I greatly rejoice with them; but this joy will soon be turned into mourning if you proceed no farther. I

* *Matthew xxii. 7.*

therefore

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therefore beseech you, for *Christ's* sake, and for the sake of your precious and immortal souls, that you would make conscience of following the messages of God's word to you, with serious meditation, and with your earnest prayers, that he would cause it to be an *engrafted word*, abundantly successful to your salvation. Consider it is absolutely necessary you should be acquainted with the powerful operations of divine truth in your hearts, changing and influencing all the faculties of your minds; and be persuaded to think how melancholly a case it will be, after having so often, and so publickly appeared together with those who fear God, in the external services of religion now, to find yourselves hereafter separated from them, even when *Jesus* shall descend to judge the world in righteousness, and take vengeance on the disobedient and unbelieving; and to find also that this separation shall be for ever.

The character, my dear friends, I stand in among you, my love to you all, and your affectionate conduct towards me, are the engaging considerations which have determined me to present you with this treatise, in this general manner, with my ardent supplications

DEDICATION. xi

plications that it may be blest for your advantage.

From the nature of the subjects handled in this volume, and the plain manner in which they are treated, it may easily be gathered, that I had no view of recommending myself to the applause of readers of a curious taste. It is to be feared many who bear the Christian name, are strangers to the life and power of godliness, and, being ignorant of experimental religion, are prone to despise all those pieces that are calculated to display and promote it; and where the work is held in contempt, the author is not like to escape censure. I am likewise too sensible of my own weakness and the many evident defects of this plain performance, to expect it should meet with any great regard from professors in general. But I hope no serious person, of any Denomination, will see cause to be offended at my attempting something towards the revival of vital godliness, at a time when there is so universal a complaint of its decay. And I trust, this sincere, tho' weak, endeavour, will in charity be accepted as a token of my concern for the honour of our Redeemer, and the comfort and usefulness of
my

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my fellow Christians ; and that those, into whose hands it may fall, will be induced from these considerations to peruse it with candour. But however it may be treated by other Christians, the many evidences I have had of your affection encourage me to hope it will meet with a favourable reception from you.

I only add my earnest request, that, whatever you read or hear, you would always *search the scriptures, and pray for me daily, without ceasing*, remembering that I am set to *watch for your souls, as one that must give an account*. And may the God of all grace enable me so to discharge my duty, and help you in such manner to improve and adorn the doctrine of *Christ*, that I may not give up my account *with grief*. I remain, (with the greatest esteem,)

Your willing servant in the Gospel

St. Mary Overy's Church-
yard, Southwark, April
14, 1746.

of our Lord Jesus,

BENJAMIN WALLIN.

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The Christian Life, a joyful
Life.

PART. I.

BEING

The substance of several

DISCOURSES,

PREACH'D

Near the *Maze-Pond, Southwark;*
December 1744.

As sorrowful yet alway rejoicing. 2 Cor.
vi. 10.

The Christian Life, a joyful
Life.

PART I.



The British Museum

DISCOURSES,

PREACHED

At the Museum, 22, Bedford
Square, London.

By the Rev. Mr. [Name]
[Name]

THE
P R E F A C E.

To the Reader,

THE following part is publish'd with a view to revive the drooping spirits of mournful Christians, and, by discovering somewhat of the privilege and pleasure of a life of faith in Christ, to encourage enquiring souls. Many fears arise on the minds of awakened sinners, to dishearten them from cherishing their convictions, yielding themselves up to Christ, and relying entirely on him for life and salvation; and the devices of Satan are not a few, to hinder the person who has committed himself into his hands, from taking the comfort that belongs to him. If, through God's blessing, any are set at liberty from their bondage-frames, in perusing these following lines, my desires will be satisfied; and, as I am certain such cannot but glorify the Redeemer,

deemer, (whose honour, I trust, I sincerely aim at) my own joy will be increased, while I am endeavouring to excite the joy of others.

When the illustrious messenger was dispatched to inform the Shepherds concerning the birth of our blessed Lord, he bid them fear not, for (continues he) behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord. This same Jesus is that Lord in whom the Apostle bids us alway rejoice, and whose suitableness and excellency I have here attempted, in some measure, to set before you; that, beholding his glory, as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, darkness might be dispelled, fears vanish, and you might rejoice in hope of eternal life.

It seems natural to think, from this declaration of the Angel, that those to whom Christ is a Saviour will find themselves in the possession of great joy at the sight of him, or in the assurance of his being a Saviour to them; to you is born, &c. and therefore
to

to you *this is good tidings of great joy; appropriation is necessary to joy, and joy is the consequence of appropriation.* He that has been brought to the saving knowledge of Christ, that has chose him for the rock of his salvation, and fled to him for refuge, cannot be an utter stranger to spiritual joy. They that receive the Gospel in its saving power, gladly embrace this word, and there is some degree of joy seems inseparable to an act of faith on Christ, and the hope which naturally and necessarily arises out of that act : but it is found, by experience, this delightful exercise of the mind is too often soon abated, and, from various causes, the joys of the true believer are frequently intercepted, and even in some instances almost totally suppress'd for a long time ; exhortations to joy are therefore very necessary in the present state of imperfection ; and I hope a representation of the object of this spiritual grace, its effects, and those things which prevent or deprive the soul of joy, will be allowed a likely means to animate the Christian in the exercise of it.

It is of the utmost importance to all that sit under the sound of this Gospel, that they receive,

ceive, and obey it ; to despise, or oppose it, must be of fatal consequence to guilty sinners, since it is to reject the only remedy God has provided for the redemption of our souls, and saving us from wrath to come : the obstinacy and ingratitude of putting it away from us will greatly aggravate our guilt in the day of judgment ; for these are the plain and awful declarations of the New Testament : there is salvation in no other, and woe be to them that neglect this salvation, for there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, therefore he that believeth not shall be damned. [Acts iv. 12. compared with Hebrews x. 26. and Mark xvi. 16.] It follows (I think) that they are stupidly ignorant who aim at a life of pleasure and joy, without the hopes of an interest in Christ ; nothing can be more irrational, or will more certainly be attended with disappointment and grief. It will greatly rejoice me to hear some thoughtless sinner convinced of his folly in attempting a joyful life, without being hid in him who is the only hiding place from everlasting sorrow, and who alone can deliver a sinner from that pit, where there is nothing but weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever ;

ever; for there the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched. Some things I hope are adapted for the benefit of such.

But my principal design being for the relief and revival of mistaken and careless believers, who, for want of clearly understanding, or diligent watching, are depress'd and sunk below the free exercise of joy in the Lord; I have laboured to shew the solid foundation they have for it under every circumstance, the great advantages of exercising this spiritual grace, and to point out some instances in which we may be personally concerned, in depriving ourselves of so great a privilege. I hope it will appear that it is not only necessary to be a Christian, but also of great advantage to be a chearful Christian; for as pining and fretfulness, wears and weakens the animal spirits, and emaciates the outward man, so a discontented heart, and a want of chearful reliance on the promises of God thro' Christ, occasions a leanness of soul, and prevents fruitfulness under a profession. It is they that are filled with peace and joy in believing, that are fat and flourishing.

I shall now leave you, Reader, looking for success, to your spiritual profit, from that holy comforter, whose office it is to take off the things of Christ, and shew them to his disciples, and who can effectually dispose and influence the soul to rejoice in the Lord; only adding, this sweet duty I am pressing you to, is so useful in raising our spirits to heaven, that the least degree of it being exercised, seldom fails of setting the soul to long after that state in which the Saints shall find fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

TO JY 60

PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.

*Rejoice in the Lord alway: and
again, I say, rejoice.*

C H A P. I.

*Containing an Explication of the Text, with
a doctrinal Observation, and the Method
proposed for the Prosecution of it.*

THE Church at *Philippi* having made a collection for the relief of the Apostle *Paul*, when he was confined at *Rome*, sent it by the hands of *Epaphroditus*, (as he acknowledges ver. 18) a person for whom the Apostle expresses a great affection, and of whom he gives an high commendation, styling him his brother, companion in labour, fellow-soldier, &c. [chap. ii. ver. 25.] It was the custom of the primitive Christians to employ the most worthy among them to distribute their bounty, and testify their love to distant fellow-saints in distress; none but persons eminent for their wisdom, and faithfulness, were sent by one body of Saints to another; and it was accounted a great reputation to be a messenger of the churches;

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hence

hence the messengers of the churches are said to be the glory of Christ. [2 Cor. viii. 23.] These *Philippians* were under great distress, and in much danger; their troubles partly arose from the sufferings of the Apostle, whom they dearly loved, as their father in the Gospel; and partly from the threats and persecutions of their adversaries. From the xvth of the *Acts* we learn, that these persons, soon after they had embraced the Gospel, had the mortification to see *Paul*, and *Silas*, his fellow-labourer, imprisoned, beat by the order of the civil magistrate, and drove away from them; so that they had but little enjoyment of these happy instruments of their conversion: and now they heard the Apostle lay bound by one of the most potent and blood-thirsty enemies of Christianity.

Let such who have felt the power, and tasted the sweetness of Gospel truth, under any person's ministry, judge what an affliction it must be to these new converts, to see their beloved minister abused after this manner, kept at a distance from them, and they in danger of seeing his face, in the flesh, no more: besides, they had many adversaries among themselves, who were the occasion of great terror to them, opposing them in their zeal for the Gospel, as appears from chap. i. 28. Their danger arose from the temptations these adversaries laid them under, viz. the Judaizing teachers, with which the church was
every

every where infected, upon the first propagation of Christianity, who laboured to yoke them with the ceremonies of the Jewish law, especially that of circumcision; and also from licentious professors, who are always both a grief and stumbling-block to serious christians, and too often their snare. The Apostle writes this epistle to warn and comfort them under these circumstances, and sends it by *Epaphroditus*, who had been dangerously ill since his departure from *Philippi*, but now, through the mercy of God, recovered, and about to return to these Saints, whose business he had undertaken. Many arguments are used to caution, and establish these believers under their sufferings; and then the epistle is closed with divers general and particular exhortations, the regarding of which was of great Importance to their steadfastness and perseverance.

These exhortations the Apostle introduces by addressing them under a beautiful variety of characters, expressive of his relation to them, affection for them, propriety in them, and expectations from them, as Seals of his Ministry; all which had a tendency to excite their attention, ver. 1. *Therefore my brethren, dearly beloved, and longed for, my Joy and Crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.* This is a lively picture of the heart of a faithful and affectionate Gospel minister, and a pattern to every one that would win souls. In such a light, ministers behold the

children of God walking in the truth, who are brought home under their ministry ; and, by expressing that affection they sincerely bear to them, incline them to listen to farther instruction for their spiritual advantage : from this general address, he descends to particular persons, [verses 2 and 3.] *I beseech Euodias, I also intreat thee true yoke-fellow, &c.* Various conjectures have been advanced concerning these persons, which are not very *profitable* in themselves, and quite foreign to my design ; therefore I shall not trouble you with them, only observe in general, they were principally women, and probably some of those who were at that season of prayer where *Paul* first preach'd when the Lord opened *Lydia's* heart. [*Acts* xvi. 13, 14.] They were such whom the Apostle believed, and looked upon, in the judgment of charity, to have their names written in the lamb's-book of life, *i. e.* among the number of those enroll'd in the book of election; being ordained to eternal life, and to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ ; this appeared from their being quickened by the spirit of God, and not (as some have imagined) by any special sight the Apostle had of that book, when he was caught up into the third Heavens, seeing it is plain, from his own account [*2 Cor.* xii. 4.] that what he saw and heard there was not lawful for him to utter ; but he declares this from the evidence of their effectual calling, the scriptural,
and

and only sure proof of being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world ; [*Ephes.* i. 4. compared with *Rom.* viii. 28.] hence the Apostle advises to give diligence to make our calling and our election sure [*2 Peter* i. 10.] for such are heirs of, and shall actually enjoy that eternal Life, which God has given us in Christ Jesus.

Having thus introduced himself, he begins with the exhortation in the words first read, *Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again, I say, rejoice.* In which you may observe,

(*First,*) The duty he excites them to be found in the practice of, (*viz.*) to rejoice.

(*Secondly,*) The object, or foundation of this joy.

(*Thirdly,*) The extent of this duty. And,

(*Lastly,*) The pressing manner in which he urges it upon them.

First, What the Apostles excites these *Philippians* to be found in the practice of, (*viz.*) rejoice.—Joy is that inward pleasure, chearfulness, and alacrity of mind, which the soul is exercised with in the certain prospect, or actual enjoyment, of some real, or apprehended good : it is the certainty of something desirable that excites this passion or affection in the mind : with respect, therefore, to worldly objects, there can be no joy till possession, but what is much allayed, because of the very great uncertainty that at-

tends the expectation, thro' the vicissitudes of the present state ; but it is otherwise with spiritual blessings, such as the true believer has an affection for, and are a proper foundation of his joy, as we may see hereafter.

To rejoice, is to take the comfort of, and express our satisfaction with what we enjoy, to delight ourselves in it : thus : [*Eccles. xi. 9*] *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, &c. i. e.* “boast and delight thyself in these things, as
 “most young people are apt to do, spending
 “the whole of their time, and thoughts about them, in the neglect of their duty to
 “God, and the care of their precious souls ;
 “which they would not do if they heartily
 “believed, and seriously considered, that for
 “these things they must be brought into judgment.” Rejoicing is a sort of triumph, boasting, and exultation of mind, productive of many external symptoms, such as a brisk countenance, singing, shouting, dancing, &c. Our Lord gives this exhortation to his Disciples, in the prospect of persecution [*Matth. v. 12.*] *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.* Here you see a certain good is presented to their consideration, to excite this temper of mind, and stir them up to rejoice. This is what the Apostle advises them to be found in the practice of, *Rejoice.* On the first
 view

view of things, it seems strange, the exhortation is very extraordinary, and may appear very unsuitable; a people under so many trials, conflicting with so many adversaries, so afflicted and troubled, thro' false friends, and furious, avowed enemies; silence, meditation, and mourning should seem more agreeable. The wise man says, in a time of prosperity be joyful, [*Eccles. vii. 14.*] but these persons were in great adversity, they had many adversaries, as before observed, that threatened them, the terrors of whom he warns them against in chap. i. 28. Patience, resignation, humility, application to the throne of grace, are all proper; but to rejoice in this vale of tears, where so many offences rise, from the persecution of some, and pollution of others, to rejoice in this sinful, sorrowful state, must be an high attainment indeed! This must flow from a principle not merely natural. Joy under such circumstances must be founded in something beyond all created good; arising, at least, from something better than this changeable world, or the perishing enjoyments of it. Rejoicing in the midst of sufferings, glorying in tribulation, is the peculiar privilege and duty of a true believer, which such an one has a solid foundation for. This leads me to observe,

Secondly, The object or foundation of this joy, or how the Saints were to be found in the

discharge of this duty, *viz. in the Lord*, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour they looked for to change their vile bodies, &c. according to the two last verses of the foregoing chapter. There is no true joy can arise to a guilty, fallen creature, but thro' Christ; it is only in the Lord, in the prospect of him, and the consideration of what he has done for them, their souls can make their boast; it is only thro' him that any thing yields delight and joy to a true enlightened soul. Rejoice, says the Apostle, not in the world, for in the world they had tribulation, and great cause of sorrow: the impiety and cruelty of the prophane, the weakness and wickedness of many professors, were the occasion of grief: not in themselves, not in their frames or duties, &c. Not in him, tho' he had been the instrument of great joy to their souls; a divine blessing on his ministry had enabled many of them gladly to receive the word; his courage and faith under his present sufferings gave them joy, and he hoped, if God permitted him, he should come to them, and continue with them for their furtherance and joy of faith, [chap. i. 25.] Christians may be the occasion of joy to each other; the presence and labours of a skilful, faithful minister may be so; our frames yield pleasure, when light shines into our hearts; the love of Christ constrains us, it occasions joy, and, in the way of duty, God makes

makes his people's heart joyful ; but still these are only joyful in the Lord, or it is the Lord in, and by his ministers, people, ordinances, and spiritual influences, that is the object of the believer's joy ; He is the only source of gladness to the christian. The Apostle knew there was no solid foundation of joy but in Christ ; no person, nor any thing short of him, can warrant such a disposition and conduct ; hence, says he, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* [Gal. vi. 14.] but in him there is every thing to rejoice and gladden the heart of an awakened sinner, let the sins and sorrows he is mourning over be what they will.

Thirdly, We have the extent of this Duty, *always*, that is, at all times, and under all circumstances ; for as there is no well-grounded joy out of Christ at any time, so there is no season or circumstances, when in him, wherein the believer may not reasonably rejoice ; natural and providential changes do not remove the hope, or destroy those blessings which are the portion, and will issue in the happiness of a believer in Christ. ALWAYS, full, or hungry, abounding, or suffering need, in darkness, or light, life, or death ; outward circumstances should make no alteration in this spiritual joy ; indeed changes, affliction, and darkness, are sensibly felt by the Christian ; clouds and billows discompose, and terrify the mind,

mind, and oft prevent the exercise of this Joy. If there were not some seasons, in which they who have a right to rejoice in the Lord are apt to indulge a sorrowful spirit, and be filled with that distress and anxiety of mind, which is contrary to such a disposition, as tho' there was no hope, this exhortation would be unnecessary. But tho' this is sometimes the case, none of these things take away the foundation of this Joy; this always remains, and the exercise of it should be constant and eternal. *Rejoice evermore*, [1 *Thes.* v. 16.] and indeed it is no wonder the Christian may, yea ought always to rejoice, since the Joy is of a spiritual kind, is in the Lord himself, taken from him, who is *Jesus*, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.

Lastly, Observe the pressing manner in which the Apostle urges this upon the *Philippians*, he repeats it, *again, I say Rejoice*; this repetition greatly enforces the exhortation, and may point out,

(1.) How earnestly the Apostle desired they should employ themselves after this manner; he longed for their spiritual comfort and joy; therefore presses it with the greatest earnestness, that they might not refuse the comfort that belonged to them: an affectionate Gospel minister loves to see his Seals walking with cheerfulness, trusting, and rejoicing in the Lord *Jesus* Christ.

(2.) It

(2.) It may point out their backwardness to this duty, a reluctance through sorrow, and many difficulties that lie in the way; our sins and our afflictions untune the mind for this delightful employment. Christians are often like the *Israelites*, when in captivity, they hang their harps on the willows, sitting down in mournful posture, and being called to this duty, are ready to answer, how shall we sing a song of the Lord in a strange land; the best of us, when hurried and distress'd with one affliction and temptation after another, are ready to repine, rather than rejoice. Perhaps there is nothing harder than to bring some Christians to rejoice aright; but this is owing to their unbelief, and for want of duly considering Him they have put their trust and confidence in, who is a continual source of joy to his Saints.

(3.) It shews the great importance of the believer's thus rejoicing; repeated, and earnest solicitations to a duty or privilege, discover the great necessity and usefulness of it; thus our Lord repeats his exhortation to watchfulness, [*Mark xiii.*] *watch ye therefore, and what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch.* This rejoicing has many salutary and noble effects, for the honour of the Redeemer, the health and comfort of our own souls, and the encouragement of others in the way of the Lord. *Again I say, rejoice;* the whole of which is, as though the
Apostle

Apostle had thus address'd himself, *viz.* " My
" dearly beloved, longed for, and crown, my
" soul greatly yerns after your present comfort
" and honour ; I know you meet with many
" threatnings, persecutions, and afflictions ; you
" have much cause of sorrow, in the world, in
" the church, in a reflection on your own frames
" and duties ; but I beseech you consider the
" Lord *Jesus* Christ, in whom you have placed
" your confidence ; there is always a founda-
" tion of joy and triumph in him, to those who
" embrace him : *Rejoice*, be not cast down and
" disquieted, as though you had no God to be
" the health of your countenance ; these things
" shall not separate you from his love, your
" union to him, or interest in him ; it becomes
" you to rejoice, this duty is of great impor-
" tance, *to the Lord whom* you trust, yourselves
" and those about you ; I intreat therefore, and
" repeat it again, I that am a servant of *Jesus*
" Christ, I that was the instrument of your con-
" version, I the prisoner of the Lord, your
" brother, whose heart is so full of affection-
" and tenderness towards you ; I intreat you, by
" all the ties of gratitude, you hear, and regard
" what I say : I say it as one that have received
" commandment from the Lord ; let me intreat
" you not to hesitate, or be betrayed into a neg-
" lect of this important privilege. *Rejoice* in
" the Lord ; I mean nothing less than what I ex-
press,

“ pref; *Again, I fay, rejoice.*” Thus the Apostle exerts his authority and affection in a remarkable manner, to influence the exhortation he gives ; fhews the importance of this duty, and the great backwardnefs of thefe perfons to it, which this skilful affectionate minifter well knowing, urges it in fo emphatical a way ; from all which we learn the following truth, *viz.*

It is one of the great duties, and privileges of the chriſtian life, to be continually rejoicing in the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt alone.*

In proſecuting this ſubject, I ſhall endeavour the following things.

- I. To ſtate this joy.
- II. To conſider what there is in Chriſt to excite it.
- III. To obſerve how it is attained.
- IV. To ſhew what the effects of this joy are on thoſe who exerciſe it.
- V. To offer ſome reaſons why this ſhould be alway the exerciſe of the believer.
- VI. To point out what has a tendency to damp, keep back, and hinder the free and conſtant exerciſe of this ſpiritual grace.

C H A P. II.

The christian joy stated; what there is in Christ to excite it, and how it is attained.

I. **T**HEN to state this joy.

This joy takes in a trust in the Lord; hence trusting and rejoicing are indifferently used in many places in the sacred writings. Thus *Israel* is said to rejoice in *Rezin* the king of *Syria*, and *Remaliab's* son; that is, they depended upon, and secured themselves in their conduct and valour with their forces, to obtain a victory over the house of *Judab*, whom they had wickedly conspired against, in order to extirpate the house of *David*, as appears from *Isaiab* viii. In like manner *Joel*, chap. ii. 23. calls upon the children of *Zion* to rejoice in the Lord their God, *i. e.* trust in his promises, that he would do those things for them mentioned in the context; and to this purpose is *Psal.* v. 11. *Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice.*

Again, it includes in it a full satisfaction of mind with respect to the Lord we trust; hence the expressions of this joy are usually accompanied with acknowledgments of the divine power,

er, holiness, and wisdom, as in the case of *Hannah*, [1 Sam. ii. 12.] My heart rejoiceth, therefore my mouth is enlarged, there is none holy as the Lord, neither is there any rock as our God.

But it formally consists in an exultation of soul, triumphing, and, as it were, boasting, and glorying in this our confidence. This is a joy the christian may always exercise under the various changes in life, and even in death itself; thus the apostle rejoiced when he thought his departure was at hand, [2 Tim. i. 12.] Nevertheless, says he, *I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.* Here is a proper specimen of this joy I am speaking of, as well as a proof that it may be exercised by the believer in a dying hour; first his trust, having committed himself to him; then his satisfaction with him whom he had trusted, for I am persuaded he is able to keep it, &c. and in consequence of this he rejoices, saying, I am not ashamed, or I glory and triumph, tho' in the views of death.

In a word, this joy arises from an inward satisfaction with the Lord, as our Lord in whom we have placed our trust, to whom we are united, and in whom there is every thing necessary for our spiritual and eternal welfare and happiness. It implies a knowledge of him, an esteem for him, and a propriety in him, consisting in
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an exultation of soul in the assurance of all those blessed consequences that do, and shall arise from it, for our unspeakable advantage; thus the daughters of mount *Zion* are called upon to rejoice in the love and power of God, because this God was their God, and would be their guide even unto death. [48th *Psal.* 11th and 14th verses compared] A draught of such joy you have *Isa.* xii. 2. *Behold God is my salvation: I will trust, for the Lord Jehovah is my song, therefore with joy will we draw water out of the wells of salvation.* It is a fruit of the spirit, [Gal. v. 22.] strangers to his holy, and efficacious operations intermeddle not with it; it can only be exerted by such who have been quickened by divine grace; it stands opposed to tormenting fears, and depressing sorrows. I will trust, and not be afraid, says the prophet, in the text just mentioned; it is irrespective of natural and providential things, being spiritual in its kind, and has spiritual objects, such as Christ, and all spiritual blessings in him; it is durable, not like carnal joys, that crack, and blaze, and soon expire, but is constant, and eternal as to its principle in the soul. These things will naturally open themselves more and more in the prosecution of this subject, agreeable to the method proposed.

II. I proceed therefore to the second General, to shew what there is in Christ to excite this joy.

joy. When the Apostle exhorts us to rejoice in the Lord, it suggests that in him there is a foundation for joy; that by looking to, conversing with, and meditating upon Christ, this rejoicing will exercise the heart; in general, there is every thing in him to excite this joy; he is a well of salvation, a fountain of fulness, a source of every blessing to the believer; there is nothing the christian can want or desire, as a creature possessed of a rational and immortal soul, or as a sensible sinner, that sees what he is exposed to thro' the fall, and his numberless transgressions, but what is to be found in Christ. If we also consider the Christian as sanctified by the spirit of God, enlightened to behold the hatefulnes of sin, the vanity of creatures, and the importance of having an interest in God as his portion, there is every thing in the Lord to satisfy his desires: particularly; the four following things are beheld in Christ by believers, which excite this joy, viz.

First, In him they behold the pardon of their sins, and a freedom from all condemnation. An appropriating view of Christ's righteousness, by which a believer is justified, has excited joy and triumph in his people in every age; see *Isa. lxi. 10.* *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.* [*Isa. xlv. 24.*] Surely shall one say in the Lord have I
C righteous-

righteousness. This justifying righteousness occasions them to glory, as ver. 25. *In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* A sense of sin, involving us under the curse of the law, binding us over to judgment, at a bar where justice must, and will take place, and consequently be followed with condemnation and and wrath, depresses the spirit, wounds the heart, and fills it with fears, terror, and anguish. Sorrow, and despairing apprehensions are the effects of guilt pressing on the conscience; but in Christ we behold a full redemption; there is with him blood shed for the remission of sins, the infinite merit of which surpasses, and reaches over all our swelling and extensive crimes. Christians see in him a sacrifice well pleasing to God, a plea for the salvation of sinners, founded in justice; in him they behold their sins are forgiven, and this excites their joy; no wonder this should be the case, for sure it must be joy to a condemned criminal, one liable every hour to be executed, to find himself discharged, and see there is a reconciliation made with his offended sovereign for him. A prospect of this justification, and receiving this atonement, occasions believers to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, to glory in tribulation, to joy in God himself. [*Rom. v. 1, 2, 3 verses, compared with the 10th of the same chapter.*] This effect it has at first conversion; a sense of sin sinks, faints, and almost overcomes the soul; but

but a view of pardon, thro' Christ, raises and gladdens the spirit; *son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.* [Matth. ix. 2.] And so afterwards, when, if believers revolt, and God brings back their iniquities, and a sense of them on their souls for their chastisement, it unsettles their peace, throws them into confusion and disorder, gives them pain, and dislocates their hearts, as it were, like a man's body when he falls to the breaking or displacing of his bones; hence the Psalmist complains in language, setting forth such like pain and misery, and cries for a fresh view of pardon, as what would fill him with joy: [Psal. li. 8.] *Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice;* in which he had a view to the sacrifice of the Messiah his Lord, of which all the sacrifices and burnt-offerings under *Moses's* law were but types and figures.

Secondly, In him they behold a sufficiency of grace; a communicative fulness; this he is furnish'd with from their heavenly father; which he faithfully and kindly bestows on all his true disciples as necessity requires; this is a great occasion of joy, for, though the believer sees his redeemer has finished transgression, God's justice is satisfied, Christ has put away the guilt of sin by the sacrifice of himself; yet he finds he is left in an imperfect sinful state, his heart is deceitful:

Altho' the power of sin is lessened, yet many pernicious lusts remain in being ; they are so subtle, and make such repeated excursions, that they frequently captivate him, and plunder him of his peace and comfort ; he is overtaken to say, and do what he disallows of, and has an aversion to ; he also is in a world of changes, vanity, and wickedness ; the effects of its frowns, and flattery he has often felt, to his great sorrow and shame ; the men of it, the things of it, have too powerful an influence on his heart, especially as the devil walks about seeking his ruin. When the believer reflects on these things, many sorrows and fears possess the mind, arising from a sense of his own weakness, in the views of corruptions, temptations, duties, and afflictions, of various kinds ; these would be too hard for him, were it not for that fulness in Christ communicated, and to be communicated for his support ; the thoughts, and experience of which, give him great joy. The true *Israelite* rejoiced in the views of strength, as well as righteousness, *Isa* xlv. beforementioned, I will rejoice in the Lord, &c. The Lord God is my strength, says the prophet, [*Habak*. iii. 19.] His grace is sufficient for me, says the Apostle, [*2 Cor*. 12.] most gladly therefore will I rejoice in mine infirmities, so 13th verse of the chapter wherein is our text, *I can do all things thro' Christ which strengthens*

strengthens me. This assistance given, makes Christians exceeding joyful. [2 Cor. vii. 4.]

Thirdly, In him they behold a power and authority unlimited and irresistible over all the worst of their enemies, so that these are actually overcome by Christ their head, and shall at length, without dispute, be really overcome by themselves; the power of Christ over the believer's enemies is a certain proof of their being all entirely subdued under his own feet: if the certainty of conquest and victory over enemies in the field of battle, be any just cause of joy, or foundation of rejoicing to the warrior, the Christian soldier has it secured in the captain of his salvation, the Lord *Jesus* Christ.

The believer is subject to fears he shall be overcome, and sometimes is, in his own apprehension, ready to perish; but this is owing to a neglect of Christ, and a want of looking to that Lord in whom he hath trusted his eternal all. *Jesus* is exalted, and crowned as victorious; he wears the laurel, and has taken up the sceptre, having spoiled principalities and powers, both on earth, and in hell; and when the Christian is able to reflect on this, he is filled with joy, and is ready to cry with holy triumph, saying, nay in all things we are more than conquerors, *i. e.* sure of a victory. Tho' I may, says the Christian, be drove from my post, beaten, and foiled, my enemies may take me by surprize, hunt me up

and down, pierce and wound me, yet at last they shall all be conquered ; and why ? because they are all conquered by, and are under the actual disposal of him that has loved me, loved me so as to die for me, so as to quicken me by his grace, and bring me from under the power of darkness ; so as to support me hitherto ; he will never suffer these mine enemies to destroy me ; but, in his due time, will enable me to make reprisals to their utter ruin : now they may insult, and say, where is your God ? but when my Redeemer shall appear with his all-sufficient grace, then they that are mine enemies shall be ashamed, mine eye shall see, and I shall trample them as the mire of the streets : Thus the prophet *Micah* [chap. vii. 10.] The victory, and power of Christ over the believer's enemies, gives joy with the highest reason to the soul that trusts in him : hence our Lord, a little before his departure, says to his disciples, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, therefore it shall never overcome you ; though it trouble you, you shall at length get a compleat victory over it. [*John* xvi. 33.] The devil is destroyed. [*Heb.* ii. 14.] This makes the believer glad, even when he seems most to prevail ; thus [*Rom.* xvi. 20.] the Apostle says, *the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*; and death, that Satan had, through the guilt of sin, a power over, Christ has conquered and disarmed him of his

his sting, according to that famous prophecy [*Hosea* xiii. 14.] *O death I will be thy Plague.* Hence the Apostle asserts [*1 Cor.* xv.] the last enemy *shall* be destroyed, and subjoins thanks to God for the victory, with as much joy and triumph, as though he had already experienced it in his own person.

Fourthly, In him they behold the pattern and security of their future happiness and glory, as their head; they know they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is; this is one of the things the Apostle *John* writes to the children, that their joy might be full [*1 John* i. 4. compared with chap. iii. 1.] Christ's preparing a mansion in heaven for his people, his taking possession as their guardian, his being crowned with glory, immortality, and eternal life, as their head, to whom, as members of his body, they shall be conformed, is, on these accounts, the prize to animate them while they run the race, and fight the good fight of faith; this joy is set before them. [*Heb.* xii. 1.] This inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, is what they are begotten to a lively hope of, and wherein they greatly rejoice; [*1 Peter* i. ver. 4, 5, and 6.] 'tis what gives them pleasure in the midst of sufferings; these they reckon are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them, when they shall be made like their glorious head. [*Rom.*

viii. 18, &c.] Thus there is in Christ, to excite the Christian's joy, the merit of his sacrifice, once offered to the putting away sin, and now pleaded for the remission thereof; the all-sufficient grace stored in him on purpose to assist under corruption, affliction, temptation, and in duties; his absolute sway over all creatures, even the worst of their enemies, and the pattern, pledge, and assurance of their future glory. In the prospect and consideration of these things, fears of wrath and ruin are banished; hopes of the divine favour, protection through all the vicissitudes of the present life, and safe arrival into that blissful state, where they shall behold their father's face in the likeness and righteousness of their elder brother, are advanced; which yield the utmost joy and pleasure to the mind. I proceed,

III. To shew you how it is attained; in which I shall be brief. In a word, it is attained through faith; hence it is, in this epistle, stiled a joy of faith. [chap. i. 25.] The soul exercises it in a way of believing. So the Apostle prays [*Rom. xv. 13.*] *now the God of hope, fill you with all peace and joy in believing*; a little reflection on what has been already said, easily discovers this. The object is Christ; his person, as God and man united in the character of mediator, his sacrifice, righteousness, situation, employment in heaven, and all the spiritual blessings contained
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in the promises of God in him ; these sources of consolation and joy are all adapted to the eye of faith ; they are all limited to revealed truth, centre in the supreme authority, and depend on the faithfulness and power of God himself, and cannot be received, so as to derive any true spiritual comfort from them, but by faith : this is the grace, power, and principle, with which alone we can draw water out of these wells of salvation. You see how the christian rejoices [1 Pet. i. 8.] *Whom having not seen ye love, in whom tho' now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ;* so in Rom. v. we find when the christian, by faith, receives the atonement, he rejoices in hope of the glory of God. It is by faith we behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world ; we see Jesus, who having tasted death, is crowned with glory, immortality, and eternal life, with all things put in subjection under his feet ; [Heb. ii. 8, 9.] and know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, and see him, as he is. It is by the word of the Lord we understand, and know these things. Faith raises this affection, and fills the mind with joy.

First, As by this we have a realizing apprehension, and inward certainty of all those spiritual blessings stored in Christ, that are the occasion of rejoicing ; the precious object is brought to our view, and ascertained ; by this principle we
sincerely,

sincerely and heartily credit God's word, and converse with it under the influence of the divine spirit, whose office it is to shew the things of Christ; it is in the exercise of faith we, thro' the sacred word, behold the excellency and preciousness of Christ; to them that believe he is precious; the glories of his person, the perfection of his righteousness, the suitableness and fulness of his grace, together with his exalted circumstances, render him abundantly so.

By faith we entirely rely upon the perfection, and faithfulness of God, who has revealed, and opened this mystery of grace; it yields a certainty to the mind, by fastening on the Divine Being himself, who is the author of this revelation, and whose honour is engaged for the fulfilment of it. That is no saving faith which does not fix on a divine person, or God in covenant with all such who trust in his word. Indeed faith itself being a supernatural grace, by its very existence, and operation in the heart of the christian, is an instance of God's power and faithfulness, being the special gift and work of his spirit; so it becomes to the happy subject a witness and evidence of every thing hoped for on the foundation of God's word. That exertion of the exceeding greatness of God's power on the heart of a regenerate person, whereby enmity against God is removed, and the soul is purified from ignorance, pride,

pride, and prejudices of various kinds, and is enabled sincerely to love God and embrace his salvation, is to that person an incontestible proof (when he seriously considers it) that God can, and will perform all the wonders of love and grace promised in the Gospel, altho' the renewed soul may be at a loss to conceive by what particular methods God's infinite wisdom, and almighty power will accomplish this his good pleasure: hence he that believeth may be said to have the witness in himself. [1 John v. 10.] A certainty there must be (as we have already seen, and shall have further occasion to mention) to raise the passion of joy towards any object, this can only be obtained thro' faith. There is such a view and certainty in the exercise of faith, with respect to these glorious and spiritual things, that the Apostle says [Heb. xi. 1.] *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*; which sentence I apprehend takes in the substance of what I have said under this head, and is an evidence of the fact of this christian experience; the reality and sweetness of which the true believer, that has tasted of this joy of faith, can conceive of better than any one is able to express.

Secondly, Another way in which faith influences the heart with joy is, as it enables the soul to trust in God, and hope for these spiritual blessings. There is a reliance, trust, and de-
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pendance that naturally arise, and are found with the exercise of this grace ; that which men call faith, which is void of trust or hope, is speculative, and what a man, under the power of corruption, and in a state of unregeneracy, may have, and consequently not the faith of God's elect, which is a principle implanted in the soul by the spirit of Christ in regeneration. [*Acts* xv. 13. *Galatians* xiii. 5. and *1 Pet.* i. 1. &c.] The faith I speak of is operative, and has an influence on the mind, so far as it prevails, disposing it to rely and depend on its object. Humane credence is that under which the heart may remain cold and fruitless, with respect to what is contained in the sacred oracles ; it leaves a person in doubts proper to scepticism and infidelity ; but true, saving operations of this grace, set the nature, glory, and importance of Christ, and those blessings contained in him, in a striking light ; fill the heart with desires after an interest in them, and by reflecting on the promises directed to such as themselves, enables the soul to trust in God for their accomplishment : trust is essential to the act of faith, in believing we trust ; these words are used indifferently in scripture. [*2 Tim.* i. 12.] I know whom I have *believed*, says the Apostle, *i. e.* trusted, as we have it in the margin of some copies.

The object of joy must be something considerable to us ; an indifferent object cannot, in any degree,

degree, raise this noble passion of the mind ; some good contained, suited to us, desired and longed for by us, is an inseparable idea to the object of joy ; and there must be an inward confidence of partaking, according to the need we have of it. It can be no otherwise than in a dependance on, and expectation from it, that joy is exercised ; now, it is through faith that the heart discerning, and being fully persuaded of the fact and substance, is led to trust, and hope : Believers rejoice, trusting in God. [*Psalms* xxviii. 7.] *The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth.* When the word is received and mixt with faith, the heart of a Christian trusts and rejoices, the word is to him the joy and rejoicing of his heart. *I rejoice at thy word,* says the Psalmist, *as one that findeth great spoil.* [*Psalms* cxixth. 162.] Hope founded on God's word, is attended with joy. [*Rom.* xii. 12.] Rejoicing in hope, for this hope is sure and stedfast. [*Heb.* vi. 19.] Humane hopes, such as have creatures for their objects, and depend on creatures for their accomplishments, are founded on probability, at best liable to disappointments ; but the christian hope is like an anchor, entering into that within the vail ; and it is certain will not make ashamed, therefore gives joy, yields matter of rejoicing in Christ, in whom all the promises of God are yea and Amen. This hope and trust are exercis'd thro' faith,

faith, as may be clearly seen from *Romans* v. before mentioned.

Thirdly, Faith influences the heart to joy by raising the affections to these spiritual blessings, [1 *Peter* i. 8.] whom having not seen we love; love to Christ, and love to spiritual things, is produced through faith's discovering the excellency of them; the soul longs after them; Christ, and the blessings of redemption and salvation, through his blood, are really excellent, not only esteemed so, but the more we converse with them, the more we shall see the glory and importance of them, and be charmed with them; this affection joined to, and co-operating with the certainty of enjoyment, which faith yields to the mind, greatly enhances joy, especially as it is in itself an evidence of an interest in this Redeemer. I love them that love me, [*Prov.* viii. 17.] love to an object is necessary to joy in that object, love disposes the heart for joy. Thus, as the believer through faith is enabled to realize, and ascertain the blessings promised in Christ, to trust in them, and raise his affections towards them; his mind is influenced to that joy in the Lord exhorted to in our Text.

C H A P. III.

The effects that spiritual joy produces in the soul that is exercised with it.

HAVING stated the Christian's joy, shewn what there is in Christ to excite it, and how it is attained, we proceed to the fourth general head of discourse, viz.

IV. To shew the effects this joy produces in those who are found in the exercise of it; some of which are as follow.

First, Serenity and compofure of mind; peace with God brings peace into the conscience; freedom from amazing fears, and a holy tranquility of mind is the consequence. There is a rest of Spirit the believer enjoys unknown to a carnal man, when, through faith, he rejoices in Christ; and an unspeakable consolation attends that joy: Heaven is begun in such a soul; as the wicked are like a troubled sea, when they are exercising their lusts; the righteous are like broad streams and rivers, where no galley with oars, or gallant ship pass through; no disturbance within, when exercising their graces, all quiet, still, serene and peaceful.

The Christian may have great outward trouble,

ble, and is liable to feel the effects of it ; he finds sorrow on various occasions ; his mind is troubled, hurried, and discomposed for a season ; but when he is enabled to reflect by faith on that provision which is made for him in Christ, that infallible security for pardon, sanctification, and a blessed issue of every trial, it calms the spirits ; a view of these things silences unbelief, chaces away every tormenting fear, and satisfies all his desires ; and the longer he is kept on this point, the more his doubts are dispell'd, and a sweet composure diffuses itself through the whole soul. In such a frame *David* seemed, when he said, with so much satisfaction, reflecting on his interest in the divine favour. [2 *Sam.* xxiii. 5.] *He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire.* So when he cries out [*Psalms* cxvi. 7.] *Return unto thy rest O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

A peaceful frame always precedes, and is necessarily pre-requisite to this holy joy ; accordingly when these are mentioned together, (as they frequently are) sometimes peace is put first, as in the Apostle's prayer [*Rom.* xv. 13.] *Now the God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing.* So in [*Rom.* xiv. 17.] *For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* But though a degree of this composure and tranquility be necessary

cessary to joy, yet it is greatly enlarged and established by the exercise of serenity ; a holy satisfaction of mind, there must be before joy can take place ; yet, when this joy is produced by a contemplation on the blessings of grace, the soul is made a partaker of, through Christ, this sweet frame and heavenly temper of mind is greatly promoted in a way of rejoicing ; thus the Apostle reckoning up the fruits of the spirit [*Gal. v. 22.*] puts peace after joy. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, &c.

Secondly, Another effect of this joy is boldness, and confidence in the face of enemies ; nothing strengthens the heart more than the exercise of this grace. It may be said with *Nebemiah*, the joy of the Lord is the believer's strength ; this exultation of mind causes triumph in the face of enemies, as it is always attended with a full assurance of the immutability, faithfulness, and power of the rock of their salvation ; so *Hannab's* joy was expressed, *2 Samuel*, having mentioned the holiness, power, and perfection of her God, she addresses her adversary after this manner : Talk no more exceeding arrogantly, &c. The Apostle wrote to these Saints, not to be terrified with their adversaries ; what he here exhorts to is admirably calculated for this purpose ; for while the believer is rejoicing in the Lord, he can bid his enemies defiance : he may have an uneasy fear, yea, he will have an holy caution,

least some temptation should overtake him, or he should, unawares, be ensnared, to the dishonour of his Lord, the wounding of his conscience, and the offending of others; but, with respect to his future happiness, and final victory, this is so entirely secure in Christ, that he can boast as tho' he had actually fought and won the battle: he can cry he is more than conqueror, and thank God for the victory. Believers exercised after this manner, as it were, despised the threatenings and rage of wicked men. [*Psal. xxvii. beginning.*] *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? &c.* This was while the Psalmist was in a rejoicing frame, as appears from ver. 6. *I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy.* To the same purpose is [*Micah vii. 8.*] The prophet, in the name of the Church, says, *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, &c.* and, in the assurance of God's bringing her forth to the light, he adds, *then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall behold her, now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets; verse 10.* The sacrifice, conquest, and intercession of Christ, and that store of grace which is lodged in him, rejoiced in, do, in the exercise of faith, fill the heart of the believer with courage against the devil himself. He resists him, knowing he must and shall fly.

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The believer is equipp'd with all his spiritual armour when he is rejoicing in the Lord ; the world with all its hatred and persecutions is defied, for Christ has overcome it ; *and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* [1 John v. 4.] Death itself is triumph'd over, as in 1 Cor. xv. 55. *O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?* And see how the Apostle, in this joy of spirit, challenges the law, and all that we have need to be afraid of as sinners. [Rom. viii. 33.] *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth.* He had been treating of the rich grace of God, in delivering up his Son to die for us, and afterwards takes notice of the accomplishment of all things necessary to our salvation, in his death, resurrection, and ascension : this challenge is as though he should say, “ knowing the love of God in the gift of his son, “ and the love of Christ in what he has done “ for us ; and considering judgment and power are in their hands, we fear not but that we “ shall come off more than conquerors at last ; “ being persuaded no creature, nor all creatures “ united against us, shall be able to separate us ; “ as in the close of the chapter.” There prevails in the heart a secret contempt of the believer's enemies, while he is rejoicing in the Lord, knowing through him he shall at length tram-

ple them under his feet, and in the name of the Lord destroy them all.

Thirdly, Another effect of this joy, is an indifferency to earthly things ; this exercise raises the soul from the dust. The more our hearts are taken up with the contemplation and hopes of an interest in Christ, and spiritual blessings in him, the more our affections will be set on things above, and consequently the less on things on the earth ; agreeable to *Colos. iii. 1. set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.* Heaven and earth divide our hearts: it were well if the latter engross'd no more than its due ; but, in proportion to our fondness for heavenly, our indifferency to earthly things will prevail ; while the believer is glorying in the cross of Christ, he finds the world is crucified to him, and he to the world ; the exceeding eternal weight of glory he sees working towards him, through every alteration and condition of life, weans his spirit from the fading, perishing enjoyments of time and sense ; like *Moses*, who esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of *Egypt*, having an eye to the recompence of reward : this joy, in the christian's eye, makes him esteem the pleasures of sense as nothing in comparison with the glory that shall be revealed ; in the exercise of this grace therefore, corruption is subdued, and the members upon the earth are mortified.

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The rejoicing christian, while in the body, may, and does relish natural and providential gifts ; yet his heart by no means rests in these things ; his joy centers not in them, but in the Lord alone ; it follows, therefore, that, in proportion to this joy, the believer is freed from covetousness, ambition, and anxiety ; those lusts that vex the spirit, and exercise the hearts of men under the sun ; therefore the 5th and 6th verses of this chapter contain exhortations to moderation and contentment. Earthly affections, producing carking cares, keep the mind in a constant perturbation, weaken the soul, prey on the vitals of true religion, alienate the heart from God, and hinder the increase of spiritual growth and comfort : but rejoicing in Christ helps the believer against every thing of this kind. From this observation you may more clearly distinguish what I mentioned under the first head, and see how joy produces consolation, peace, and serenity, even by purifying the soul from those corrupt and carnal affections, the requirements of which, when indulged by us, distract and disturb the mind. As a contemplation of Christ, by faith, and what we partake of in him, begets a composure of mind, and fills the heart with some degree of courage, and thus makes way for joy ; so the longer this joy continues, and the more lively it is, the greater degrees of peace and confidence arise to, and

are found with the soul, advanced by divine grace to such a glorious pitch: here we may admire the beauty of holiness, which is the work of grace on the heart. The several graces of the divine spirit, under his sweet gales and influence, mutually assist each other; they conspire also to promote the divine Life, and ripen the Saint for an eternal state. Some good degree of composure and courage may be, where but little joy is felt; but vigorous joy is attended with the profoundest tranquility, and most undaunted courage; and this is, in a great measure, owing to the influence of spiritual joy, raising the heart from earthly objects, and promoting an indifferency to the creature.

Fourthly and lastly; Another effect of this joy, is a holy freedom in duty: believers being delivered from the hands of their enemies, they serve God without fear; *i. e.* slavish, tormenting fear. I believe every experimental christian can set his seal to this truth, that joy enlarges the heart; and when God is pleased thus to exercise the soul, it runs the way of his commands with pleasure and delight; when the mind is tossed with cares and fears, through unbelief, and love to the world, sorrows oppress the heart, we are heavy, straightened, and drag on with great labour; but when rejoicing in the Lord, the work, ways, house, statutes, and word of the Lord are delightful; natural joy you know produces

duces a lively sparkling countenance, it causes persons to lift up their heads, they are ready to leap and sing; spiritual joy so affects the powers of a believer's soul, that in duty he rejoices as a strong man to run a race, confident of success, though not in his own strength, knowing he does not run at an uncertainty; he longs for the appointed season, and is glad when it comes, for he is persuaded every duty shall, in some way, be for the glory of his redeemer, and his own advantage; since he never said to the seed of *Jacob*, seek ye me in vain.

In this frame, with what freedom do believers wrestle at the throne of grace? How do they pour out their souls to God, when Christ is sensibly in them the hope of glory? The promises flow in like streams of living water, their tongues can scarce keep pace with their indicting hearts; they then want no matter, seldom are at a loss for words; with great liberty and delight do they attend reading, hearing, and meditating on the word; they cheerfully open their eyes to behold the sacred records of that divine love, and wisdom, the fruits of which they are now rejoicing in; and their ears are freely open, being ready to say, I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace to his people and to his saints. In short, every institution is delightful, and however the believer is employed in the house of God, it is with the great-

est pleasure and readiness ; every appointment is a rich source of consolation : he can thus with joy draw water out of these wells of salvation ; especially praise, is a duty for which he is hereby set at liberty ; joy inclines the lips to sing and sometimes to shout : The christian is ready to break out, as [*Psalm cxlv.*] *I will extol thee my God, O King, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever* ; when the heart is thus glad the tongue rejoiceth ; 'tis with every true believer, in this frame as it is prophesied of the Church on the blossoming and budding of the Gospel, in the call of the *Gentiles*. They rejoice with joy and singing ; singing and shouting are proper symptoms of being glad with all our Heart [*Zephaniah iii. 14.*] *Sing O Daughter of Zion, shout O Israel, be glad and rejoice with all the heart* : answerable is the 17th verse, it is said God would joy over them with singing. My soul, says *David*, shall make her boast of the Lord, the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. The scripture informs us of some backsliders, who, when pleading with God for his restoring mercy, promised that if the Lord would make them hear the voice of joy and gladness, by manifesting his pardoning love, their tongue should sing aloud of his mercy, they would render him the calves of their lips [*Psalm li. 14. Hosea xiv. 2.*]

These following are the noble effects of this grace, exercised in the heart, under the influence of the
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divine spirit, *viz.* Serenity, and composure, a holy tranquility of soul, boldness and courage in the face even of enemies, an indifferency to earthly things, whereby the mind is released from the influence of many disquieting lusts, and great freedom in the duty of prayer, and every ordinance, especially that of praise and thanksgiving; no wonder then that the Apostle, who longed for their happiness, should so earnestly recommend and exhort them to rejoice in the Lord, and that always: Which brings me to the next and fifth general head of discourse, *viz.* To offer some reasons, why it should always be the exercise of the believer to rejoice in the Lord alone, of which in the following chapter.

C H A P. IV.

Containing reasons why a believer should always rejoice in Christ alone.

FIRST, because out of the Lord Jesus Christ there is no solid foundation for joy at any time, to any person, under any circumstances whatever: as for the unregenerate, they can have no just pretence to joy; the boastings of a christless sinner are highly presumptuous, and dangerous; we are by nature under the curse of the law as guilty; the impenitent sinner has this
curse

curse following him wherever he goes, and under every circumstance the wrath of God abideth on him ; his laughter will surely be turned into mourning; in the midst of it indeed there is heaviness ; so dying, the end will be ruin ; he is sporting at the mouth of hell, and on the brink of destruction. But to pass this, since our text is an exhortation to professing christians, who in the judgment of charity had their names written in the book of life, and our question consequently is, why a believer should rejoice only in the Lord ; the renewed soul has no joy out of him ; not in the world ; the joys that arise from thence, and the things of it, to carnal men, and those that seek after, and have their portion in it, are so fleeting and transitory, leave such a sting behind them, and produce so much heaviness, that such empty changeable things can be no foundation of joy, or the short-lived pleasures that arise from them deserve the name ; but the believer finds little else than tribulation in the world : Besidethe afflictions he is incident to in common with other persons, there is a becoming singularity in him, that naturally arises from the discharge of his conscience, and produces no small degree of trouble ; the testimony he necessarily bears against a prophane, and impious generation of men, and for Christ, and the truths of the Gospel, draw on him the hatred of such persons ; he must expect, if
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he is faithful and zealous, what his Lord has foretold, *John* xvi. 33.

His daily converse with spiritual things convinces him more and more of the emptiness of temporal enjoyments, and renders them insipid; he cannot be entertained with them any farther than they are subservient to fill him with adoration, and thankfulness to his heavenly father; and this happy improvement of them he too seldom finds, for, in general, if he meets with no violence and oppression from wicked men, and providence smiles, his outward ease betrays him into carnal security, and indisposes him for duty; the neglect, or formal performance of which, occasions the hidings of God's face, and consequently produces so many spiritual sorrows, that, upon the least awakening and reflection, he must acknowledge they are no foundation of joy.

Nor have believers any foundation of joy in themselves, either in their frames, or duties: In the best of these we are so weak, deficient and changeable, that the careful observer of his own heart may see great occasion of sorrow: The Apostle indeed says, *Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.* [Gal. vi. 4.] But upon due consideration, I think it will appear to be a joy flowing from the evidence that arises from the fruit of the spirit within him, whereby he is
assured

assured that he is a partaker of that spirit, and consequently in Christ, in whom alone a believer can rejoice ; when a Christian examines his heart, compares his works with the description given in the sacred records, and finds the true stamp, that they are works wrought indeed of God, and God is with him, it yields joy ; his uprightness, faith, and love, being of the right kind, give him delight, yet still his joy is in the Lord, not in himself ; for there is no rejoicing in any work without viewing ourselves in Christ, whose merits atone for the imperfection of the best of our services ; hence the Apostle, in the same chapter, ver. 14, says, *God forbid I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* ; besides, Christ is the fountain, source, and spring of all spiritual life, motion, and action ; without him the believer can do nothing ; and what he does in Christ, he leaves the marks of his own weakness upon, &c. By the Apostle's saying he shall have a rejoicing in *himself*, I apprehend, agreeable to the scope of his subject, he intends to shew this work must be personal, and that spiritual joy exercised on a good foundation here, or that will stand in the great day of trial, must arise from a personal interest in Christ, and vital union to him ; but out of him there is no joy at all ; the Christian could not reflect on one duty with joy, was there not a redeemer, through whose hands his services ascend to God, perfumed with
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with the incense of his merit ; nor could he without him, encounter with any one temptation, affliction, &c. It is only in Christ that there are wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption : to seek joy in any thing out of Christ, is to seek the living among the dead ; even in a converted state, and in the best of frames.

Secondly, Another reason why a believer should rejoice always in Christ alone, is, because there is always a foundation of joy for a true believer in Christ. He is *Jesus*, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, able to save to the uttermost ; no circumstance or condition can possibly befall him to warrant his laying aside this joy ; nothing can take away this foundation of joy from the true christian ; for his Redeemer's merits are infinite, his righteousness is everlasting, his fullness inexhaustible ; no affliction, however heavy, or of how long continuance soever, can do it ; none of the sorrows or changes of the present state are any obstruction to the christian's everlasting security and happiness, and, by consequence, not to his joy and triumph in the Lord ; it is not pain and sickness, poverty and outward distress, reproach, contempt, and hatred from those about us ; it is not inward darkness through the prevailings of indwelling sin, or the hidings of God's face, not a dissolution itself, the most formidable of all natural evils to nature that can destroy this joy.

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When no creature can administer comfort, even in the least degree, the soul may rejoice in the Lord ; saying, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want : though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil ; he may triumph ; O death where is thy sting, &c. If you follow the believer into eternity, and view him at the bar of a holy, sin-hating God, even there, notwithstanding his sin and unworthiness, personally considered, his heart will rejoice, and his lips sing of the rich mercy and grace of God, and to the honour of the Lamb, who has redeemed him by his blood : at the day of judgment, when terrors shall lay hold of the wicked, and they shall flee in vain to hide their guilty souls, the faithful disciples, and true lovers of this *Jesus* shall joy in him, from whom they receive the attonement, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ ; while he that believeth not is condemned already, and being found in that helpless, and dreadful condition, at the awful season, when there will be a general summons to appear before God, will rise to everlasting shame and contempt : but the christian shall then lift up his head, and shout forth the praises of his Lord and Saviour.

There is no sorrow, distress, or darkness, but that the believer may see his Lord went through, and can sympathize with him under ; for he was
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in all things made like unto his brethren, not only in respect to his taking upon him our nature, really consisting of a true body, and a reasonable human soul ; but also in the treatment he met with ; not only afflictions ; but temptations from satan, from the world, or from his heavenly father ; so that while the christian looks to christ, he is beholding not only a sufficiency of grace to support him under, and carry him through all these various scenes, (as mentioned under a former head) but he is assured, upon reflection, that nothing of this kind (though gloomy and grievous for the present) is any proper evidence against his filial relation to God, or share in his special love and favour ; a sweet and delightful consideration in times of the utmost distress ; and this makes him rejoice in Christ as a suitable Saviour ; by this experience he is able to sympathize with him ; one end of his going through many sufferings was, that he might be a merciful high priest, and succour them under temptations, being sensibly touched with the feeling of their infirmities. [*Heb. ii. 17, 18. compared with chap. iv. ver. 15.*]

Personal pollution, and those sorrows that immediately arise from the being, and warrings of indwelling sin, indeed Christ had no experimental acquaintance with ; he knew no sin in this sense ; when the prince of this world came to him therefore he found nothing in him. [*John xiv.*

30.] Under the weight of a body of sin, the believer rejoices in the Lord, not as cloathed with human nature, but as possess'd of every divine perfection, as God, and as such a discernor of the secrets of all hearts, knowing all that is within them, and therefore capable of undermining, overthrowing, and destroying all the subtilty and power of those deceitful and violent lusts that abide in their members : if Christ was not God as well as man, the believer could not always rejoice in him, in respect to what I now mention: for the experience of the saint, under the fatigues of a body of sin, shews the necessity there is for the assistance of a divine person, or of having the truth of the divine nature in the person of the mediator, without which there could be no suitable, or sufficient relief for the soul groaning under a sense of the corruption of his heart, and the frequent instances in which he is brought into captivity to the law of sin in his members.

This Lord is no less than that glorious word that was God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God ; [chap. ii. and vi. of this same epistle] hence christians know he is able to subdue all their iniquities ; and every believer has an inward witness of the power, and faithfulness of his redeemer in his conversion ; who then broke the power of corruption, whereby they that were once darkness, are now become light in the Lord ; once the voluntary servants of
pride,

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pride, and other lusts, following the dictates of that apostate spirit that works in the children of disobedience ; but now they hate the sin they do, and delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man. They can thus rejoice in the Lord *always*, even under the sorrows of indwelling sin, knowing their redeemer is God as well as man, able therefore thoroughly to subdue, and perfectly to cleanse them ; he having already proved upon them his power over corruption, by changing their hearts, they are confident of this very thing, that he who has begun the good work will perform it to the end.

In a word, the infallible security believers have in Christ is universal and eternal, reaches to all circumstances, and conditions, to their whole persons in this world, and in that which is to come. This joy of all the saints therefore should be *always*.

Thirdly, This is very needful and profitable at all times ; the Apostle is directing these saints about their temper and conduct, during their passage through this life : now there is no state or condition here on earth, in which this of rejoicing in the Lord is not very needful and profitable, both for strengthening of graces, and weakening of corruptions : this joy is no speculative, or indifferent thing, but has a real, practical, and experimental influence on the heart and life of the christian : this may be partly gathered

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from what has been already said upon the effects of this joy filling the soul with peace and courage, heavenly mindedness, and holy freedom in duty; but here I principally regard the conduct of the christian, under the influence of this joy, so useful in prosperity, and adversity.

In prosperity, and that either outward, or inward; temptations attend under each, which rejoicing always, and alone in Christ happily preserves from the evil of. First, outward prosperity; if God smiles in his providence, distinguishes us with health and riches, &c. This joy in the Lord is highly necessary to prevent pride and wantonness; it will, so far as it prevails, guard us from the abuse of worldly things, while we are in the possession of them; and also from immoderate sorrow and distraction upon their being removed; we are prone to these evils. The Apostle writing to *Timothy* [1 Epistle, vi. 17.] says, *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded*; by this is shewn, how apt our vain minds are to be puffed up with an abundance of this world's goods: nor, continues he, *trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy*; for it is too often seen that the rich man's wealth is his strong city. [*Prov.* xviii. 11.] When this is the case, men gratify their lusts with their substance, and think nothing of the honour of God; no wonder, seeing they have forgot he gave them
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them their corn, and wine, and oil : they prepare it for *Baal* as the *Israelites* of old ; but when, in the midst of plenty, the believer is rejoicing in him who is the fountain and giver of every good gift, adoring his distinguishing mercy, trusting in him as his portion, this will promote the greatest moderation, sobriety, and chastity, and all the fruits of holiness. This is the way to honour God with our talents, our substance, and all those peculiar favours, of a providential kind, which he is pleased to bestow upon us, so to conduct ourselves in outward prosperity, as to have the comfort of it here, and the joy of it hereafter ; see 18th and 19th verses of the aforementioned 1 *Tim.* vi. That *They, i. e.* these rich persons, in a humble dependance on the living God, *do good, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.* On the other hand, if God is pleased to strip the Christian of those comforts, (for there is no certainty) he changes the state of such that fear him from riches to poverty at his pleasure, and all these his paths are mercy and truth to them ; or when he calls us away from these enjoyments, as he certainly will ere it be long, for here we have no continuance or abiding ; I say, under a separation from the creature in life, or out of it, happy are they who, while in the possession of

their worldly affluences, have rejoiced in the Lord ; they can still say as the faithful in captivity, stripp'd of all their possessions, or earthly riches, *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.* [Lament. iii. 24.] such can resign in life, or at death, with patience, and reflect with comfort.

Again, the like may be observed of inward and spiritual prosperity ; rejoicing in the Lord is very necessary and profitable at such a season ; when we are favoured with an increase of knowledge and gifts, enjoy much liberty in duty, and sit under the light of God's countenance ; under such circumstances we are prone to spiritual pride, contempt of our weak fellow saints, and self confidence ; but this joy tends much to prevent these evils, leading the soul continually to Christ, who is the same in himself, and, as mediator, to all his people, though he varies in his dispensation of the sensible enjoyment of these spiritual comforts among them, in wisdom and faithfulness, and he oft takes away these indulgencies, when his children are in danger of being exalted above measure. In all these cases it is good for us to rejoice in the Lord *always*, and in him alone : when Christians think^t their mountain stands strong, and that they shall never be moved from the delightful sensation of these peculiar mercies, they, in that very thought, partially depart from that trust and joy in the Lord,

Lord, exhorted to in our text : such are in danger of growing proud and careless ; therefore the Lord will visit them, and bring them down into the valley.

Considering the vicissitudes of the present state, we should take heed how we rejoice, that our joy in prosperity, outward, or inward, be not in our circumstances, frames, or duties. If we would avoid sorrow and disgrace, we must rejoice in the Lord alone, live upon Christ, who is our life, and will be so, when all things here shall perish and vanish away for ever. The beginning of our Christian race may be smooth and easy ; our morning may break clear and pleasant, the beams of the sun rejoice us, we may find the charming influence of the divine spirit raising our affections frequently to God, repeating his witness in our hearts, giving us many discoveries of our interest in the love of God, and sealing us up to the day of redemption ; but the Lord, by his sovereign pleasure, may see fit to change his dispensations, and the day may close with clouds and rain, wind and tempest : he is a sure refuge in every storm to the soul that lives in the exercise of faith upon him ; but every Christian who, in an unbelieving frame, is not found trusting in him, when overtaken with calamity and darkness, will find great sorrow ; all joy that is out of Christ himself will fail.

The joy I have been speaking of, will keep the soul from fainting, and being overwhelm'd in adversity. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* [Psaln xxvii. 13.] This chearfulness of spirit, in tribulation of every kind, arises from the view of what there is in Christ to support the Christian under, and carry him thro' every thing ; such as his infinite merit, and all-sufficient fullness, as has been before observed, and indeed proved from the second reason itself, viz. that there is alway a foundation of joy in Christ ; I therefore pass it. I shall only add, it is always profitable, because healthful to the soul ; a merry heart maketh the bones fat, says *Solomon* ; so in spiritual things, a chearful soul, relying on, and rejoicing in Christ, goes from strength to strength ; this exercises and invigorates every grace ; and is to the honour of God, and the good of others. We should not therefore hang down our heads as though we had no hope ; since as there is no hope out of Christ, and consequently no joy, so there is always in him a constant solid foundation for it, and it is every way advantageous, and necessary in every circumstance and condition of life. Prudence and gratitude call for what the Apostle here exhorts to : it may be said to a melancholly professor, why art thou cast down and disquieted ? why goest thou

thou on with so much sorrow and sadness? which naturally leads me to the last thing proposed, viz.

CHAP. V.

Containing an account of some things that damp and prevent our joy in Christ.

VI. **T**O point out some things that tend to prevent the believer's exercise of this joy, or what throws, or keeps him out of a joyful frame. There is nothing more common, than for persons of sad and melancholly dispositions to justify themselves, and think they do right; but it is no good sign when persons refuse to be comforted; I mean, in the Lord; all consolation must fail to an enlightened person, who is under a due apprehension of his condition in the first *Adam*, and of his partaking of the same corruption with him, without a discovery of Christ; but in the view, knowledge, and hopes of an interest in the second *Adam*, this Lord from heaven, 'tis wrong to refuse comfort; where a person has a scriptural testimony of his love to Christ, and desires after a conformity to his holy and divine image, these indisputable evidences of the grace of God should encourage him to rejoice with the hopes of being in him, in whom all grace is treasured up:

not to rejoice in such a case, is a token of some ill disposition of soul, it generally springs from some secret iniquity prevailing in the heart; such are those who are captivated by the law of sin, which, upon examination, will be found to enslave their minds with some false notions, some groundless fears and expectations, which impede the heart in its joyful course, so that the Christian cannot rejoice in the Lord as he would. I am not here to enlarge on the various causes of sorrow, the excess of which often obstructs this joy; such as pain and sickness on the outward man; stripping providences that sometimes betray persons into a frame, like *Rachel*, who weeping for her children would not be comforted; perplexed circumstances of life, through losses of other kinds, disappointments, injustice, cruelty, and ingratitude of those about us, in which circumstances we are too apt to repine. We need great grace to be still, and know that he is God who permits these things in his wise dispensations, which are always conducted agreeable to his covenant; and so to consider that he performs all things for us, as to patiently wait, and hope for his salvation; nor is it my business to bring in here fore temptations to unbounded grief, and utter neglect of the duty enjoined in our text; nor desertion or the hidings of God's face, which wounds the heart more than every other sorrow; and to which the dearest of God's children
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are liable, during their passage through this howling wilderness. My subject leads me to point out why the believer does not rejoice under all these circumstances, since the duty exhorted to, is to rejoice *alway*: the question is, what hinders the believer from rejoicing, even under the darkest dispensations? and here I shall content myself with mentioning three particular causes, which some of the best of Christians have found by sorrowful experience.

First, Unbelief: This is clear from what has been said, for we have shewn it is only through faith the Christian rejoices; when unbelief prevails, the promises are not credited: the disciples were in great sadness on account of our Lord's death; what was this owing to? unbelief; as he tells them, when he overtook them after his resurrection, O fools! says he, and slow of heart to believe, &c. The Lord however dissipated their fears, and manifested himself in such a manner as made them glad [*John* xx. 20.] with joy these disciples relate what they had seen, and been convinced of, to *Thomas*, who was not present at the time when *Jesus* shewed himself; and in this man there appears another instance how unbelief hinders joy, for he could not receive their joyful account, or take the comfort of it, for want of faith; *except I see the print in his nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe*; in this manner

manner he continued till the Redeemer condescended to grant him the undeserved favour. [*John* xx. 25, 27.]

There is a secret infidelity that lurks in the heart, and mingles itself with our meditations, when, under any circumstances, we refuse to rejoice in the Lord ; notwithstanding God's word is clear, and full in its testimony, and the promises are many and precious under every circumstance. This was the case with all the disciples at our Lord's departure ; the reason why they did not rejoice in him, was, because they did not clearly understand, and heartily believe his resurrection, and exaltation ; and the important business he was to execute in heaven, in the behalf of them, and all his people, in [*John* xiv.] therefore he begins, *believe in God, believe also in me* ; and then he proceeds to relate where he was going, and what to do. Faith is an heart-cheering grace, but unbelief is a soul-depressing vice and corruption ; it yields nothing but sorrow to the mind. Where men are in a state of unbelief, and continue so to the end of time, it loads the soul with guilt, and will be attended with everlasting sorrow and mourning ; but I am speaking of them in whom its domineering power is broken ; true Christians are sometimes sluggish to believe, this makes them suffer much in their spiritual comfort, and obstructs their joy ; when this disposition prevails, the promises are not firmly

firmly trusted in, or depended upon ; but there is no rejoicing without such a trust, or hope of being partakers of the blessings of divine love, freely bestowed through Christ *Jesus*, revealed in the Gospel : in this frame the mind is filled with hesitation and doubts concerning the word, or its being a word for us, it diffuses a thousand insinuations into the mind to prevent an hearty reliance on the Lord, without which there can be no true or solid joy in him.

Secondly, Worldly mindedness, and busying ourselves too much with worldly things, is a great hindrance to this joy ; this flows from a thirst after, and a strong favour of the things of the flesh, and is mightily assisted by unbelief ; persons are betrayed into a sensual frame, they believe not the repeated voice of sacred writ, and daily experience, respecting the uncertainty, and unsatisfying nature of earthly enjoyments : they forget that riches make themselves wings, and fly away, that in a night their soul may be required of them ; and that there is but a short space at longest, e're they must go as naked out of this world, as they came into it. These things are forgot, and unbelief in these truths prevails to the begetting of worldly mindedness ; and when men fall into anxiety, covetousness, and minding of earthly things, this worldly spirit clogs the soul, and deadens its affections to spiritual things : the hopes, and fears of such a person, all his expectations
and

and thoughts are employed in the views of long life, large estates, great services to themselves, and their posterity. When such who have tasted the grace of God fall into this frame, Satan prompts them with a flattering insinuation of doing good to the cause of Christ, when they have arrived to such and such circumstances: this is an old stratagem; how vain and deceitful all such pretences are, the experience of every real Saint, that has been overtaken with the temptation, abundantly testifies. A Christian ought to be industrious, and should chearfully partake of what providence throws in: joy may arise to himself and those about him, when, under the influence of grace he attends to, and enjoys these things; but when the heart is betrayed into worldly cares, away goes spiritual joy.

The goodness of a man's estate does not alter the nature and influence of a worldly mind; what effect this has on an unregenerate person who is wholly carnal, sensual and worldly; the same it has, in proportion to its influence, on a soul renewed by the grace of God, when overtaken with such a frame: our Lord tells us there is a sort of joy some persons have in hearing the word which lasts but for a while; and why? because the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, choke the word, that it becometh unfruitful. When a true Christian entangles himself with
worldly

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worldly things, it has the like effect upon him ; he cannot fr^ustify under the word ; these cares are like thorns that hinder the growth of the seed ; they pierce him with sorrow, and his mind, under their influence, becomes dull and inactive as to spiritual things, and utterly unfit for rejoicing in the Lord, which is only to be performed in a lively frame ; all joy in the Lord is produced through faith, under the spirit's assistance, in attending to, and meditating upon God's word, in which are set forth his love to poor sinners, the provision he has made in his own Son for their salvation, and the glories of the person, sacrifice, and grace of this Redeemer ; but by worldly mindedness this is obstructed, for the heart cannot mind earthly things, and at the same time attend earnestly to this word : persons in this frame, inordinately pursuing after the pleasures or profits of the present life, cannot, as they ought, either hear, read, or contemplate ; for their *Canaanitish*, merchandizing spirit, and worldly thoughts, which croud in like a rude multitude, distracting, dividing, and hurrying the mind to and fro, prevent that steadiness and composure necessary to this joy ; these gradually cool, and quench that fervency, zeal, and affection for God, and spiritual things, which they formerly felt.

While men covet after the world, says the Apostle, they pierce themselves through with
many

many sorrows ; no wonder therefore that they loose many joys ; such joys indeed^{ly} as the object they are in pursuit of, if they attain it, will never compensate them for the loss of : Such persons are ever complaining ; for as they have no joy in themselves, they give none to those they are in fellowship with : they spend the whole of their time and thoughts, as it were, from one publick day of worship to another, about the world ; even, it is to be feared, to the neglect of private duty itself ; and when they come under the means at the more stated publick seasons, their hearts are so impressed with earthly objects, and their affections so deadened to spiritual things, that they have no pleasure therein ; then the poor minister, who is watching for their souls, is complained of, and sometimes his ministration neglected, because they find little or no comfort in the ways of the Lord ; whereas it is owing to their own carnality, and worldly mindedness : so evil treated are some of the most skilful and faithful of the Lord's servants, by Christians in such a frame. But,

Thirdly and lastly, Another thing that obstructs and banishes joy, is an indulgence of sin : the allowance of any, even the least degree of sin, either of omission or commission, greatly hinders our joy in the Lord. When persons practise what their hearts condemn them in, or live in the neglect of what they are convinced is their duty, it prevents

vents this rejoicing; they cannot with confidence and pleasure look to him whom they have offended and abused: this often proves the consequence of the compliances beforementioned; for when men are so captivated by the law of sin, as with eager desire to set out on the hunt after this world, it is seldom they go far before they meet with some obstruction; something arises to startle their consciences, yet tender; the difficulty is like an hedge or gate that presents itself to the sportsman, over which he must go or loose his game; at this, young beginners especially, are apt to pause a while, and perhaps spend some time in contriving how to get over at an easier passage than what appears at first view; and when this is the case with a wandering soul, it seems no ill policy in Satan, in order to facilitate his design, to lead him to some path where he shall not be exposed to so great a shock, for the first or second attempt however; but, if grace prevent not, such who thus start at the sound of Satan's horn, when they are heated with the noise of his hounds, and mingled with the company that follows him, will soon grow hardy enough to leap over, and break through any difficulty. Persons are permitted to rise up under the character of ministers and guides, who, being corrupted in their own minds, and for filthy lucre's sake, flatter men in their vices, feed their vanity, and are thereby the occasion of many falling into such a disposition

position and conduct; these have been stiled dogs, by Prophets and Apostles, and are represented in scripture as belonging to Satan; and when persons are led aside by them, into a pursuit after the profits and pleasures of this world, they are, by degrees, not only brought into a compliance with temptation, but their consciences gradually harden, till at length they stick at nothing; in this way multitudes of formal professors, we have reason to believe, make entire shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and go down to hell after all their glittering shew of godliness.

But though the true Christian may backslide, and be suffered to go great lengths, his heart may grow stupid and insensible, so as that for a time his negligence and presumption may lay him under a just suspicion of those who observe him; God will restore him in faithfulness; for when he comes who is able to reduce the most obstinate, and to bring them to a sense of their evil, deep and pungent sorrow will arise upon reflection, and he will weep bitterly. If we allow ourselves to stifle our convictions, neglect our duty, and oppose the light of our consciences, in the indulgence of sinful actions, this will banish serenity, and the consequence will be, not only that of our running into excess of riot, as well as all lesser degrees of sin, which have the same unhappy tendency, as spending too much time
about

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about the pleasures and business of the world, and too little in our duty to God, and our soul's welfare.

The least degree of condemnation in our own hearts, with respect to any of these, enfeebles the soul, and takes away that courage towards the Lord necessary to joy in him : all spiritual joy arises from a view of Christ by faith, reflecting on what he has done for us, and what we are in him ; but in sinful indulgences there is no turning within but conscience flies in the face ; reflection is not to be born, joy is therefore prevented by these criminal allowances, as they hinder the means of attaining it ; a good conscience is absolutely necessary to joy in the Lord ; every thing that violates, and offends our consciences, fills the soul with slavish fear, quenches light, damps the spirit, and extinguishes joy ; the beginnings of such allowances which are attended with these effects, are more confirmed and increased by a long continuance in such practices, obstinately persisting in these courses, grieves the spirit of God, provokes him to hide his face, and withhold those cheering influences, without which the heart cannot rejoice, no more than a natural man can exercise natural joy, when his animal spirits are all decayed, and dying away ; when this is the case, desertion is followed with darkness, and a horrid gloom seizes the mind ; when such are awakened to see what a condition they

have brought themselves into, the heart is sore pained, and there is nothing but groans, and cries from the depths of sorrow. Where the dictates of conscience are not faithfully attended to, these are the sad consequences; to listen to its voice is of such importance in order to this joy, that we find the Apostle [*1 Thes. v.*] after he had exhorted them to rejoice evermore, verse 16. a phrase synonymous with our text, adds, *pray without ceasing*, and then he goes on to exhort them to cherish the motions of the divine spirit, in and upon their hearts, and to attend diligently to the duties of their profession, and also to *abstain from all appearance of evil*. In like manner he adds in this chapter wherein is our text, that they should be found in the practice of every thing that is praise worthy, and to be following whatever might be for the glory of God, and the edification of others. The testimony of a good conscience is a great occasion of rejoicing, [*2 Cor. i. 12.*] though that rejoicing is only in the Lord, through whose grace they have obtained mercy to be found faithful, and who alone can enable them to persevere; every indulgence of sin destroys this testimony, and incapacitates the soul for joy.

Thus, I have endeavoured to set before you something of the nature, causes, and effects of spiritual joy in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only true source of joy to a poor fallen sensible sinner; and

and to offer some reasons, why our joy should be *alway*, and alone in the Lord ; likewise, that we may see into the reason why many Christians live so seldom in the delightful enjoyment of this privilege, and how they may avoid what tends to deprive them of it. I have further pointed out some of the principal things, which prevent and hinder the exercise of this spiritual grace ; thro' the whole I have attempted to give you the plain and obvious sense of those scriptures, made use of relating to this divine and spiritual subject. I have been emboldened to speak the freer, as I think this description and account of the matter, answers to my own experience, I hope with respect to the attainment of this delightful exercise of the soul ; but especially as to the causes of the obstruction, hindrance, and banishment of this heavenly temper of mind. If the hearts of any of my readers should be struck with convictions, stifle them not, if you value the prosperity of your souls, and would taste the pleasures of true religion ; if you think I have said any thing that you can bear a testimony to in your own spirits, and are thereby filled with any degree of wonder or joy, remember it is by the grace of God, I am what I am, and by many sorrowful exercises of heart, I have been brought to the knowledge of what I have laid before you ; yet we shall always have reason to bless God for those sorrows that have, under his blessing, occasioned us to

rejoice in the Lord, who is thus an eternal foundation of joy to the true believer.

C H A P. VI.

Containing several reflections by way of Improvement.

WE now proceed to the Improvement of the foregoing subject.

In the first place then, how greatly are they mistaken who represent the Christian life as a melancholy life? if the believer has thus occasion always to rejoice in the Lord, and the exercise of this joy is so pleasant and healthful to the soul, producing the noble effects we have observed, surely this representation of it is false: they who speak thus of true religion, and the fear and love of God through Christ, betray their ignorance, and the base affections their viciated minds are enslaved with; can a life that always takes in an object, in whom there is such an infallible source of joy, under every circumstance to him that lives in it, in any true or proper sense be stiled a melancholy life? surely it is unreasonable to assert it; such who dress up the Christian life in so forlorn and disagreeable a garb, and represent it as destitute of true honour or pleasure, either believe nothing of that spiritual joy our text ex-
horts

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horts us to, or at least have no degree of experimental acquaintance with it.

When young persons find convictions first move upon their hearts, they are often tempted to put off the thoughts of their eternal welfare, (and to some, there is reason to believe, it has proved the occasion of their eternal ruin) I say, such when their consciences begin to rouse, have been tempted to procrastinate and put off seeking after their eternal peace, by attending to the word and ways of God, lest they should live a mopish life; satan suggests, farewell all delights when once the yoke is put on; this is very disagreeable news to flesh and blood, what? nothing but prayers and tears, humiliation and self-denial? who can bear it! hence friendly notices of their danger, by reason of sin and guilt, and of the grace of God in providing a redeemer, and the sufficiency of this redeemer to save to the utmost, are not embraced; slight convictions that but little touch the heart, are stifled, and the spirit quenched: but this is all an artifice of the devil for the destruction of souls. The Christian may, and ought you see, always to rejoice in the Lord, there are joys in the Christian life therefore: If we cannot infer this, we can conclude nothing from the text; nor can there be any sense or truth in this exhortation. Indeed there is no truly joyful life, but the Christian life; and it would be easy to shew from scripture, that there are joys in the supplications, godly sor-

row, &c. of a believer ; or at least that unspeakable joys are mingled with, and follow upon their having exercised themselves after that manner : but this is unnecessary to the experienced Christian, and some taste of it in our own experience, is necessary to take in how these things influence the heart with joy. That joy belongs to the Christian, is plain from the truth before us ; what reasonable person, on due reflection, will say, that a life in which there is an opportunity for rejoicing *alway*, is, or can be a life destitute of delight and pleasure ? If there are any delightful exercises of the humane mind, sure this of rejoicing will be allowed one ? we must boldly confront the word, and deny that there is any such thing as joy in the christian life ; or admit that there are pleasures and delights to be found in walking as becomes the Gospel.

I am sorry any under a profession of Christianity, should by their deportment and conversation be assisting to the common enemy, who subtilly takes advantage from their discontented looks and froward behaviour to strengthen this insinuation ; whereby he deludes many poor souls into sorrow, if not eternal misery ; and I would to God every professor who finds himself of a dull melancholick disposition, would use great diligence, by watching and praying against a compliance with such a temper : if some were aware how much dishonour they bring to the
name

name of their Lord, and what occasion of stumbling to others, they would strive more earnestly against it; a peevish, murmuring, complaining spirit is quite out of character for such who hope, through the riches of divine grace, that their names are written in the book of life; and therefore such ought always to rejoice in the Lord. But let none misunderstand this to their prejudice, it is proper for us to distinguish betwixt a christian life and the life of a Christian: the life of a Christian may be a melancholy life in all appearance, and perhaps in reality for a season; and yet the christian life a joyful one: for the tormenting fears and anguish of spirit that render the life of some Christians thus, arise from some other quarter, and not from christianity: It does not arise from the principle of divine life and grace in the heart; for *the fruit of the spirit is joy*. [Galat. v. 22.] nor from the object of their trust and joy, the Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is inexhaustibly filled with every thing to maintain it; but 'tis owing to some corruption in the person thus melancholy, as we have shewn; the best being imperfect in the present state; but true religion is not to be charged with any thing of this sort.

Therefore be not deceived, this is a device of the old serpent to turn you aside from that in which alone true delight and solid pleasure can be found; without a saving acquaintance with

Christ, all your life is vanity and vexation of spirit: creatures will fail and disappoint you, and sorrow will be in the end. A true believer is ready to acknowledge the time of his ignorance and unbelief not worthy to be reckoned into any part of his life; and that he never knew what living spiritually was, till he was help'd so to think of his way, as to fly to Christ, and turn his feet into God's testimonies; nor do we know what a joyful life is, till we come to live a life of Faith on the son of God, which is always attended with obedience to his commands, a holy fear of, and an abstaining from the appearance of those sinful pleasures that are a dishonour to his sacred name, and which war against the tranquility of his precious soul. But I pass on,

Secondly, This should raise our admiration, and also our thankfulness to the almighty for the gift of his son. Is it so that there is always a foundation of Joy in Christ, who is thus full of merit and strength; has he conquered our enemies, and entered into glory as the head and pattern of his people? how much reason then have we to follow the example of the Apostle, by rejoicing in the prospect of certain conquest over death and the grave, and to say with him, thanks be unto God for this unspeakable gift? Joy and thanksgiving go together, the latter is the offspring of the former: it wou'd be very ungrateful, while we are entertaining ourselves with so delightful

lightful an object, not to acknowledge with thankfulness, the wisdom, grace, and love of him that bestowed this favour upon us. Doubtless the experienced Christian may, on reflection, be able to assert from his own knowledge, that it is impossible to rejoice in Christ, but at the same time the heart will be disposed to thank God for Christ.

If we consider our deplorable condition thro' the Fall, and what a foundation of sorrow sin has brought on our natures, and into our world, such as condemnation, banishment from the presence of God, and the pouring out the vials of his wrath on our guilty heads; if we consider the sorrows in life under the curse, the sorrows of death, the aggravated sorrows of the eternal condition of all Christless sinners, who dying impenitent, are to reap the fearful wages of sin in another world; surely these considerations, attended with the least hopes of our being brought to repentance, and sharing in the undertakings of this all-sufficient redeemer, must make us cry out with our whole hearts, blessed be God for *Jesus* Christ: we are bound to give thanks always that God spared not his own Son. This *Jesus* has, by his infinite power and merit, finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and thereby laid a foundation, even for such sinners as we are, always to rejoice.

O! how

O! how has he loved us, so as to give his only begotten Son for us; his dear Son, and in him thus to give us all things, peace, pardon, victory, prosperity in every circumstance here, and eternal life hereafter, to us that deserved wrath, condemnation, shame and eternal misery; surely we have great occasion to call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to bless the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus* Christ, who has thus blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in him. Ungrateful stupid hearts of ours, that need to be so much excited to joy and thankfulness! that ever we should entertain an hard thought, or drop a murmuring word under any Circumstance, against the God of our salvation; since we have so much reason to say, I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be continually in my mouth, who has thus redeemed me to himself, and caused me to rejoice in his beloved Son. But,

Thirdly, How happy is the true Christian? happy sure are the people in such a case; a people that are always in prosperity, and that, in Christ, may ever rejoice; what reasonable man, that is acquainted with the world, would say to any other person on the face of the earth, rejoice *always* but to the true Christian, or to him except in the Lord? The believer is liable to natural and various changes in common with other men, a large share of trouble and affliction is frequently
his

his lot, yet he is bid always to rejoice ; to rejoice in the midst of sufferings, and to glory in tribulation, would be unnatural, yea impossible, if there was not a supernatural cause ; this the Christian is furnished with, by the grace of God in his Son, and by his Spirit : changes can never affect, so as to ruin him that is prepared for every vicissitude in such a manner as not to be without a source of Joy at all times, and under all Circumstances ; hence, though cast down, the believer is not destroyed ; perplexed, but not in despair, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing. The Lord *Jehovah* is his refuge, a very present help in trouble, therefore he need not fear, tho' the earth be removed, and the Mountains thereof be cast into the Sea ; such have continual streams from that river which doth gladden the hearts of those that are fellow citizens with the Saints, and can rejoice, saying the Lord of Hosts is with me, the God of *Jacob* is my help. *Happy is that People who are in such a case, yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord.* [cxliv Psalm, verse 15, compared with other passages.]

Watch, O believer ! against every thing that tends to prevent, or banish this joy from your heart : if you would know the sweetness and pleasure of a christian life, you must be circumspect and vigilant ; you must watch against unbelief ; being too much entangled in worldly things, especially tremble at, and shun what has
any

any tendency to betray you into an indulgence of iniquity : he that is careless will be comfortless ; peace and joy are attained through believing, and this Faith purifies the heart, and works by love ; where the members that are upon the earth are not mortified, and persons are negligent, this joy, so fruitful, pleasant, and healthful to the soul, will not take place, much less be in any free and constant exercise : pray therefore that faith may be increased, be not so conformed to this world, so as to *mind*, that is, to give up your affections and heart to it, lest it betray you into that criminal indulgence, which you have been awfully warned against ; for if you would discharge this duty, if you would enjoy this privilege of believers, you must watch and strive for the testimony of a good conscience, the least violation of which, will certainly damp this joy ; for all true spiritual joy is obtained by looking to, and conversing with Christ, who is the Lord, from whom alone it proceeds ; it is impossible you should, with courage and comfort, look to him whom you are daily offending, him who holds wilful sin in the highest abomination : it is by the reflection of this glorious sun of righteousness on our souls, when we lift the eye of faith up to him, that we are filled with rejoicing, for he is the righteous Lord that loveth righteousness, and his countenance beholdeth the upright.

Finally,

Finally, Consider believer, when you find any alteration for the worse, and those joys abate you once experienced in the ways of the Lord, whether you have not given way to the suggestions of unbelief, and in some instances, attended to the vain imaginations of your own deceitful heart, rather than the commands, promises, or threatenings of your bible ; whether through a neglect of, or opposition to the light therein contained, you have not given yourself too much up to the things of time and sense, and are not now at least slackening your diligence and zeal against some sin, or carelessly omitting some known duty, that stands in the way of your pursuit after this world : I beseech you to search and examine, and wherein you find yourself culpable, confess it before the Lord, who waits to be gracious, and therefore under such circumstances there is room to rejoice in him : if we are enabled to humble ourselves, he will exalt us in due time, and restore the joys of his salvation : let such that walk in darkness, keep close to the Lord in the way of their duty, resolve in the strength of divine grace, to indulge nothing contrary to his known pleasure, and then fear not ; though sorrow may fill your heart, through a dispensation which is intended for purging away your sin, and exercising your graces, this weeping will endure but for a night, joy cometh in the morning. It
is

is but for a small moment he hides his face, with everlasting kindness will he gather you ; he will in a little time cause light to rise out of obscurity ; ye that trust in the Lord be not afraid ; it shall go well with you, you shall rejoice ; for light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart ; let it encourage and comfort you, that shortly all obstructions to this sweet exercise of soul, which flows from love to God, and sensible enjoyment of him, reconciled through the great Mediator, will be done away for ever, when we shall no longer be attended with imperfection in our spiritual exercises, have our hearts no more clogged or clouded with sin and ignorance ; but being perfectly sanctified, shall join the redeemer, and return with them when everlasting joy shall be on their heads, for they shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing shall be done away : Wherefore comfort yourself with these words, *Rejoice in the Lord alway, again I say rejoice.*

A
H Y M N,

Suited to the forgoing DISCOURSE.

I.

*WIPE off your tears, ye mourning Saints,
Behold the Lord, your trust and choice ;
Let thanks be heard, and not complaints ;
In him you always may rejoice.*

II.

*What though your num'rous sins exceed
The sands, and are of crimson hue ;
His meritorious blood will plead
Away the guilt, for such as you.*

III.

*His grace has all-sufficient prov'd,
In every straight it shall be nigh
To them that trust him, whom he lov'd,
And for whose sake he came to die.*

IV. Trium-

IV.

*Triumphant he arose, and chain'd
The worst that threaten, or you fear ;
A victory sure, shall be obtain'd,
Ye shall as conquerors appear.*

V.

*Rejoice in this your Lord, and see
Of future joy a pattern bright ;
For like him surely you will be,
When ye have fought the heavenly fight.*

VI.

*Let peace and courage then return,
And banish every worldly care ;
My soul with joy and freedom run,
The path your Saviour doth prepare.*

VII.

*Oh! for the time, when I shall tread
On sin, and death, and Satan's pride ;
Be with, and like my glorious head,
Nor more their insolence abide.*

The End of the first Part.

THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE,
PART II.
OR,
Christ's appearance a motive
to christian moderation.

BEING
Some thoughts on the temper and
conduct which become those
who profess to wait for the Lord
Jesus Christ from heaven.

*If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things
which are above.* Colos. iii. 1.

*Follow peace with all men, and holiness,
without which no man shall see the Lord.*
Hebrews xii. 14.



T H E

P R E F A C E.

Reader,

YOU are a stranger to yourself, if you have never been convinced, that, through the fall, you are not only under the curse of the law, and naturally deserving the wrath of God, but also under the power of sin, whose tyranny has exerted itself through your whole person and life, while you lay in an unconverted state; for this is the reflection of those who are duly enlightened, we were some time disobedient, deceived; serving divers lusts and pleasures.

Pollution having, by our sad apostacy, thus extended itself equal with our guilt, the grace and love of God, who purposed in himself before the world began, according to his good pleasure, to save some of Adam's

fallen race, has not only provided for the removal of the charge and condemnation, through the merits of his Son's blood; but also, through the efficacious, unfrustrable operation of his almighty Spirit, for the restoration of our hearts to his image, and recovering us from under the power of the prince of darkness, and that dominion sin has usurped over us; for he hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit. And herein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; since it is morally impossible for us to enjoy the benefits of freedom from condemnation, while slaves to corruption: without this grace we should be still left in a miserable bondage; communion and fellowship with a holy God would be impracticable, were this wanting, the immortal soul can never be happy, let the cause of its distance be what it will: this renewing grace, therefore, was absolutely necessary to accomplish the design of God in saving his elect, and advancing them to the enjoyment of himself.

From this depravity no one individual of the sons of men is exempt; for it is natural to us as fallen creatures; we are shapen in iniquity,

P R E F A C E.

v.

iniquity, and bear the likeness of our corrupted ancestors; we come into the world the sinful children of sinful parents; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? It is of the utmost importance, that this our state be altered, our natures cleansed, and that we partake of this sanctifying grace; for except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

In regeneration, a principle of divine life and holiness is implanted in the soul, and thereby, under the influence of the same spirit that first created it, the work of sanctification gradually proceeds; and in proportion to the increase thereof, sin, in all its members, the lusts of the flesh, and the mind, are mortified and subdued; and it is the mercy and comfort of all those who have been thus renewed, that at length a total and final victory shall certainly be obtained over these inbred enemies: for we are confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Where this heavenly temper is formed, and prevails, there will be humility, love, and purity evident in the conversation of him, in whom it is implanted; and altho' these graces may be interrupted in their exercise, while in this state of imperfection, yet, without some good degree of them, in the general deportment of professors, all their pretences to this saving change, I am speaking of, are justly to be suspected; and it is to be feared that such greatly deceive themselves; for the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, &c. If the former conversation, which is corrupt according to the old man, be not put off, there is no evidence of being translated out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear son. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are past away, all things are become new,

It is therefore very affecting to behold those that talk of the work of the spirit of God upon their hearts, indulging themselves in covetousness, sensuality, pride, and passion; or to see persons that have taken upon them the name of Christ, minding earthly things,

P R E F A C E. vii.

things, neglecting their duty to God and their neighbour, in pursuit after the world; discovering, on the least provocation, bitterness, wrath, and clamour. To see professors puffed up with a conceit of themselves; censorious, and cruel towards others they are concerned with in the world, or in the church; surely such persons are enemies to the cross of Christ, distinguished by what name, or invested with what office soever among God's people; these are to be pitied and prayed for, as under a most dangerous delusion, with respect to their own state: men may deceive themselves, God will not be mocked; what a man soweth he shall reap; he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. But licentious professors are to be detected and shunn'd as instruments of the common adversary, for they are perpetually the occasion of hardening sinners, grieving the godly, and thereby preventing the visible growth and glory of the churches.

Damage does not altogether arise from wicked men and hypocrites, but careless believers, in their carnal frames, do great mischief to true religion. It appears then from this

description given, that the work of sanctification is progressive and gradual, and consequently imperfect, as to its degree in the hearts of true Christians; they are not infallibly secure from being overtaken with frames, in which their conduct, for a season, under some powerful temptation, may be evidently impress'd with the law of sin, which dwells and wars in their members; during this captivity they loose their savour for spiritual things, and are entangled with earthly affections. They have no heart for secret prayer, meditation, or self examination: their Families are not prayed with, or instructed in the grace of God, and the things that pertain to the welfare of immortal souls: publick worship is attended upon by them but seldom, or late, and perhaps not only with indifferency, but with indecency too: they grow vain glorious, and contentious; their behaviour in the church is full of envy and strife, and produces confusion and every evil work; so that one would think, if it were possible, that the man once quickened, is again dead in trespasses and sins. The Apostle is thought by many to address himself to such sleepy back sliders, when he cries
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out, awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. However, though God's power and faithfulness shall secure the believer from finally apostatizing; yet his own carelessness, betraying him into such a disposition and conduct, dishonours the name of the redeemer, vails his evidences, prevents his usefulness, and entails shame and sorrow on his own soul, and that of his fellow saints: it becomes us therefore to exhort one another to let our moderation be known unto all men; for he is the most shining and profitable Christian who makes it appear to every one, that he walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

*The visible tokens, and universal complaints of the decay of practical and vital godliness, with all denominations of professors among us, is a sufficient excuse for my insisting on a subject of this nature. If the instances of moderation I have pointed out, with their proper symptoms, and their motives, flowing from the argument chosen by the Apostle to enforce our diligence in the Christian life, should be the means of undeceiving any poor deluded person, or awaken
any*

any drowsy believer to shake off his spiritual sloth, I shall have occasion to rejoice, and let such ascribe the glory of their profit, by these my weak endeavours, unto him to whom alone 'tis due. I only add, it is a dreadful thing to have the form of Godliness, and deny the power of it. If you live in the spirit, walk in the spirit, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Some

PART II.

CONTAINING

*Some exhortations to, and arguments
for Christian moderation, enforced
from the expectation of the appear-
ance of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

PHILIPPIANS iv. 5.

*Let your moderation be known unto all-men.
The Lord is at hand.*

CHAP. I.

*Containing an explication of the text, with a
doctrinal observation, and the method pro-
posed for the prosecution of it.*

THE Apostle having stirred up the
Philippians to that noble exercise of
spiritual joy, proceeds to exhort them
to moderation: Moderation is of great Importance in the Christian life, on the two following accounts especially.

First, As it is a necessary evidence of a person's having tasted of the grace of God, by which a believer is brought to see his interest in
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the divine favour, and thereby obtain a foundation for rejoicing in the Lord.

Secondly, By reason of the sweet influence it has on the mind, in promoting that tranquility which is so necessary to the exercise of joy in the Lord: thus it has its use to encourage and dispose the soul for running the christian race; and in order to which, the oil of joy and gladness in *Christ Jesus* is so constantly beneficial, as appears from the verse immediately preceding the text; that the moderation intended is such an evidence, and has such an influence, will, I hope, sufficiently appear, on a more particular explication and improvement of this passage of scripture.

In this apostolical direction, we have observable, First, The exhortation. Secondly, the argument.

First, The exhortation, *Let your moderation be known unto all men.* Moderation here signifies modesty, a patient mind, lenity or meekness; it is a temper, soft, easy, and gentle, a tender beneficent disposition, and stands opposed to a passionate, hasty spirit, which, in proportion to its influence, makes a person fierce and cruel, and fills him with violence and severity. Through the corruption of nature, persons are prone to be immoderate; inordinate affections prevail, these promote an undue heat in the mind, harden the
heart

heart, and excess of every kind is often the consequence ; hence, men are apt to be on the extrem, giving way to their lusts, which stand in need of great restraint. Moderation is a spiritual sobriety and temperance, respecting all persons and things, whereby a man is disposed not only to justice, but goodness ; such goodness, in our behaviour towards one another, seems one principal thing in the Apostle's view ; for the expression carries in it a willingness to yield and forbear, not going to the rigour of things ; an unwillingness to contend ; a desire rather to conform, as much as may be, for peace and edification ; the true limitation and extent of which I purpose hereafter to give a specimen of in some Instances that fall within the compass of general experience. In the mean time it must, I think, be owned, that there is a natural bias, through corrupt affections, to the contrary : men are naturally proud, covetous, filled with hatred, envy, &c. hence they are full of strife ; taking all advantages, and having no mercy on such they correspond with. These lusts are not alike predominantly evident in every man's outward life and conversation, while in a state of unregeneracy ; God has various methods of restraining, when he sees fit, even persons who remain under the influence of the fall, and the power of the wicked one : but when the spirit comes with his regenerating influences

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influences to dispossess the strong man armed, he breaks the domineering power of sin, and changes these affections ; as a moderator, if I may so express it, he enters the heart, subdues, qualifies, and regulates the soul ; the heart is made good ; thus there is in every converted person the principle of this moderation. The Apostle writes to such as had this good work begun in them ; he is not speaking of moderation as a meer moral virtue, but as exercised in the fear of God, from a principle of divine grace in the heart, which arises from better motives, and is directed to nobler ends than can be produced from the heart of man in its corrupted, fallen state ; this is the fruit of the spirit, *it is in all goodness, and righteousness and truth. This wisdom from above, is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, &c.* [Ephes. v. 9, compared with Isa. iii. 17.] True christian moderation flows from a sanctified mind, a soul rectified by the grace of God ; now this is what he exhorts to the exercise of, that it may be made manifest, and conspicuous : this regards our conduct and behaviour in the sight of, and towards all men ; the believer should not be vainly ostentatious, but he is to be concerned, as providence calls him, to discover the grace of God within him, and let his light shine. The testimony of a good conscience in the sight of God yields great comfort, under the
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the reproaches of the wicked, where the man that fears him is not capable of convincing and proving the contrary, which is sometimes the case; but we are not to be careless and indifferent how our conversation appears, under a pretence of not valuing our fellow-creatures; we are in every thing to endeavour to approve ourselves the servants of God in the sight of men, that his name be honoured, and that such, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven. Let your moderation be known unto all men; “ Let all men experience your moderation, *q. d.* in every thing you say and do, “ make it evident you are not governed by those “ fierce and savage lusts which the children of “ disobedience are serving of, and you yourselves were once servants to; let your conversation with, and before all sorts of persons, “ among yourselves and others, in the world, “ and in the church, be moderate: let all your “ words and actions, both in civil and religious “ matters, be attended with this temper and disposition; so that every person you converse “ with, in every affair and all circumstances, may “ plainly see, and be obliged to own you are “ not influenced by those passions and humours “ too generally predominant; but that, by the “ grace of God, sobriety and moderation run “ through the whole of your conduct.” This seems

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seems the substance of the exhortation, and leads to,

Secondly, The argument made use of by the Apostle to enforce this moderation, viz. *The Lord is at hand*; the same Lord in whom you ought always to rejoice, who is no other than the Lord *Jesus Christ*, as mentioned verse 20 of the foregoing chapter; he is at hand; he is present say some, he is nigh; first, with respect to the immensity of his nature as God. He is present with every one of us, considered in his divine nature, in regard of which, in the days of his humiliation, when standing here on earth, he speaks of himself as in *Heaven*, [*John* iii. 13.] so now he is exalted, though his glorified body being truly humane, is locally confined, and can be but in one place at one and the same time; yet, as God, he is every where; hence he could say to his disciples, when about to ascend, *lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world*; and is able to fulfil that encouraging promise, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*. The presence of so great a Being, may have an influence to check our passions, a forgetfulness of which is oft the occasion of persons complying with temptation to sin.

Secondly, Christ is present by his spirit, by which he takes up his abode in the hearts of believers; they are stiled *an habitation of God through the spirit*; Christ is said to dwell in them: this is
a sense

a sense in which the Lord may be said to be at hand, and an argument for moderation; the consideration of it may justly make us ashamed of defiling ourselves with those lusts and passions which prevail against moderation. This spiritual presence of Christ is a great argument for what the Apostle exhorts to. But I cannot think either of these senses is here intended; this phrase *at hand*, or *nigh*, has, I think, clearly two senses in scripture. *First*, sometimes the subject is referred to as very near, yet not actually present; it is used so as manifestly to imply some distance, though but small: thus the Apostle speaking concerning the time of his decease, [2 *Tim* iv. 6.] *The time of my departure is at hand*, i. e. he daily expected it, both on account of his age, and the threatenings of the persecutor who held him in bonds, but it was not yet come: in like manner [Matt. xxiv. 32, 33.] our Lord speaking of the signs of his coming, says, the *fig-tree*, *when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh*; so likewise ye when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Thus it appears being *at hand*, or *nigh*, does not always necessarily imply the actual presence of the subject spoken of. But then, *secondly*, it must be allowed this phrase is sometimes used to signify something actually, or but just that instant, as it were, come; the most that can be made of this, if it supposes the object present, is, that

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it has newly appeared ; thus *the kingdom of heaven*, or the Gospel dispensation, is said to be *at hand* ; [Matt. x. 7.] that is, was now come, upon the appearance of Christ, who *brought life and immortality to light*, and came to abolish the Jewish ceremonies. Our Lord also says of the hour in which he was to be betrayed, it is *at hand* ; [Matt. xxvi. 45.] this was immediately fulfilled by the appearance of *Judas*, the execrable traitor. The import of this phrase being either to express something near, but at some small distance, or, at most, that the subject spoken of, is newly and just present ; it follows, that neither the presence of Christ necessary to his divine nature, nor that presence he may be said to have by his spirit in his called ones, is what the Apostle means in the text, because his omnipresence, as God, and his inhabitation by his spirit in the hearts of believers, are senses in which he is ever actually present with them ; as may be argued from his nature and his promise.

It seems therefore most natural to understand the words of our text, of Christ's second coming ; and in this light it becomes a very strong argument to the Apostle's design : this sense exactly corresponds with many other passages, where the same duty is exhorted to, and urged from the same consideration, as I shall have occasion to shew ; Christ's personal appearance, as mediator, when he shall descend from heaven. This
coming

coming of the Lord is clearly revealed, and abundantly confirmed in scripture; the Apostle speaks of looking for him verse 20 of the chapter preceeding that wherein is our text: *Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.* True believers have in all ages been delighted in the expectation of it, and it is accordingly stiled the *blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* [Titus ii. 13] This expectation shall not be disappointed, for the Apostle assures us [2 Thess. i. 7.] *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven; and positively affirms, to them that look for him shall be appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* [Heb. ix. 28.] This time is certain in which Christ shall come to judge the world, it is fixed and settled in the eternal councils of infinite wisdom. [Acts xvii. 31.] There is a day in which God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; who is the Lord Christ, as appears from 2 Tim. iv. 1. And as this is certain, so it is hastening upon us: *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, said, behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his Saints.* [Jude xiv.] He speaks of it as drawing nigh and approaching, though scoffers may say, *where is the promise of his coming,* as in respect to the last conflagration. [2 Peter iii. 9.] *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise; but saith, I come quickly.* [Revel. xx. 20.]

He will certainly, and soon appear, and the consideration of it is often urged to stir up the believer in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty, as well as for abstaining from sin: thus in the forementioned 2 *Tim.* iv. 1. *I charge thee therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, &c.* This is further explained by the Apostle *James*, chap. v. 8 9. who urges this in order to have patience under trials; *be patient, establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.* This coming, is the second coming of *Christ* to judgment, for he adds, *grudge not one against another,—behold the judge standeth before the door.* The substance of our text therefore is this: these professors were to discover and make manifest to all sorts of persons their moderation and sobriety, a modest, kind, and tender spirit in the whole of their conversation; they were to labour to make it evident in the sight of all that beheld them, or they were concerned with, that they were not governed by those fierce and outrageous passions that prevail in such who lie under the power of Satan; knowing it will be but a little time, and the Lord will make his second appearance, according to his promise, and the declaration of his word: from whence we may raise this observation; that,

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The certain and speedy appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to his word, should influence his disciples to great moderation in the whole of their conduct.

That *Christ* will appear, we have not only hinted, but proved ; there is nothing more comfortable to the Christian, nor is there any thing more clearly revealed : it is one of the delightful truths of the Gospel, which believers in all ages have rejoiced in ; a secret pleasure and entertainment with, and desire after it, seems essential to the true disciples of the redeemer ; since they are represented as looking for him, as before mentioned ; and the Apostle, speaking of the honour Christ will confer on his true disciples, and the glory they shall enjoy through the redeemer's merits, styles it *a crown of righteousness*, and says he will give it *to all them that love his appearance*. [2 *Tim.* iv. 8.] This appearance will not be delayed, it will not be long before it is made ; our text, and other places touched on in the explanation, shew this. In a word, that moderation is to run through the whole of the conversation, and conduct of Christ's disciples, is plain, because it is to be made known to all men ; here is no limitation, consequently, to men at all times, and under all characters, &c. whenever, as well as wherever, we find them : besides the

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argument used, proves this to be the case to the end of their days, because the force of it lies in the nearness of Christ's coming : now this great season draws nearer and nearer every day, and consequently the argument grows stronger and stronger. If the nigh approach of Christ's coming is an argument with me to day to mortify my corruptions, and use moderation, it must certainly be urged with more force upon me, if I live till the morrow, since it is so much the nearer. It follows, by the way, that this argument to moderation is a more powerful motive to us in the present day, than it could be to professors in the days of the Apostle ; because the greatest part of two thousand years is elapsed, and the actual appearance of the Lord is so much the less distant ; at least I apprehend this circumstance will leave us the more inexcusable, if we should be found to indulge our passions, lusts, and appetites.

In this exhortation, urged from the consideration mentioned, 'tis hinted to us, that moderation is always good in itself, and also that there is something laid up in Christ's coming ; something to be issued, performed, and transacted at that solemn season, which, if duly considered, has a very strong tendency to excite us to the practice of it. The method in which I would pursue this subject, for further improvement, is as follows, *viz.*

First,

First, Point out some particular instances in which the believer should be careful to discover a spirit of moderation, and what are the proper symptoms of it.

Secondly, Offer some reasons why the certain and speedy appearance of Christ should promote this spirit of moderation, and allay those sinful passions that make head against it.

C H A P. II.

Shewing in what instances the Christian should discover a spirit of moderation in the world, with the evidences of it.

WE are now to shew in what particular instances the believer should exercise and endeavour to discover a spirit of moderation, and what are the proper symptoms of it. By putting these together we shall have an opportunity of closely connecting the latter with the former as we pass along, and thereby more easily form a judgment of ourselves respecting the point before us.

The duty is universal, as before observed; the method chosen is by no means therefore to be understood as to imply there are any instances in which the Christian is not to exercise moderation; this would be to speak inconsistent with

the truth, and also with what has been already said ; but it would be endless to attempt a representation of every circumstance under which the Christian ought to exercise the moderation incumbent upon him ; yet it is highly necessary for our profit, that we trace this matter practically and experimentally ; for the speculative knowledge of this moderation, without the practice of it, will but render our condemnation so much the heavier : I have therefore thought it adviseable to touch on some particulars that may affect every one, and some instances in which we find, by common experience, we are remarkably prone to be immoderate. An excess in which, perhaps, the best of us have reason to own, with blushing, that we have sometimes been overtaken with, and which, if, in general, any of us are free from, we must acknowledge it is owing to the restraining, or special grace of God. And for the clearer conception of this matter, I shall throw my thoughts under this head into two general divisions ; under each of which I shall point out the evidences of this spirit of moderation : and first consider the believer's conduct with respect to the world, and secondly as a professor, and in the church.

First, As to the world, about temporal and worldly things, and in the eyes of the men of the world, it is of great importance that the believer should attend to this direction : the expression

pression *all men* we have seen takes in prophane, and ignorant persons among the rest, to whom it is our duty to make known the temper and conduct described. The Christian that values his own comfort, or the honour of God, or that walks under the influence of any considerable light, will be careful to use great moderation in these two respects. *First*, as to the attainment and possession of the world. *Secondly*, as to the use and enjoyment of it.

First, As to the attainment and possession of the world, this word is used in opposition to covetousness, and being *greedy of filthy lucre*. [1 Tim. iii. 3.] where the same word is translated *patient*; speaking of the character of a bishop, he says, he must not be *greedy of filthy lucre*, but *patient*. This has reference to a worldly minded person: a man that is given to an immoderate pursuit after the things of this life, is impatient, he thirsts after them, and seldom has patience till providence gives him possession, but eagerly snatches before it is his due; he is ready to bite and tear his fellow creature, from whom he expects to obtain it. Now, about obtaining this world's goods, we ought to moderate our thoughts and actions, and let it appear to all men that our affections are set on things above, and that our hearts are in heaven where our treasure is. I hereby intend nothing to the detriment of industry, but to the destruction of that sinful anxiety

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anxiety about increasing our store, which is so frequently spoken against in the sacred writings; professors, notorious for this, are enemies to their own souls, enemies to the cross of Christ; they pierce themselves thro' with many sorrows, and cause their fellow Christians to go weeping: this moderation agrees with what is contained in the verse following our text, *be careful for nothing*, or at least attending to this advice, is necessary to the moderation I am speaking of; an anxious, perplexing solitude, and distrustful care, are there intended, agreeable to our Lord's exhortation, [*Luke xii. 22.*] *Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, &c.* Diligence is to be used in our several callings to provide things honestly in the sight of all men, and for other valuable ends and purposes; but there is an immoderate pursuit after these things, by making them the whole of our business, under the influence of unbelief and covetousness.

Some men are carking, grasping after, and endeavouring with their might to monopolize the world to themselves; such a hunt after worldly things is unworthy of those who have been brought to the knowledge of Christ, and profess to trust in God as their heavenly Father through him; such who hope for an inheritance laid up in heaven, from whence they look for a Saviour, should avoid this eagerness after treasure on earth, as they would evidence the reality of such an hope and expectation: let the men of
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the world take the world in this respect, let them *join house to house, and lay field to field*, or endeavour it, *till there be no place* for them; and let them take the woe, the sorrowful consequence pronounced against such. [*Isaiab* v. 8.] They, that have their portion in this life, are ignorant of, and consequently are not professedly desiring of, or working after any other; they act in character indeed, though it is a stupid one, and unworthy of rational creatures; but the Christian who professes an interest in heaven, he must, if he has in him the truth of faith, in the cross of Christ, be crucified, in some proportionable measure, to the world; sit loose in his mind to earthly things, having his affections set on things above; I say such an one should labour to make this appear by his moderation, in this respect, behave himself like a weaned child, and let it be known by all his measures that his desires are chiefly tending to more spiritual objects.

Secondly, The use and enjoyment of worldly things is another instance in which a Christian should use great moderation, this stands opposed to luxury and wantonness; a sober, modest enjoyment of such things as God in his providence affords, is highly becoming; this is one way of expressing our sense of, and thankfulness for his distinguishing bounty to us; a prudent and decent use of them often becomes subservient to the glory of God, and the good of our fellow creatures;

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creatures ; this also is necessary to avoid the suspicion of being immoderate in the instance beforementioned ; for one symptom of being too much set on worldly possessions, is where persons in plentiful circumstances deny themselves the necessaries and conveniences of life ; this is very unbecoming, and an abuse of his goodness who has furnished them with their abundance ; and indeed they who do not live in some proportion to what the wise disposer of all things has seen fit to bestow on them, can scarce be excused from the sin of covetousness ; not but that frugality, with respect to our own personal enjoyment, in order to a more extensive generosity, is a noble disposition and conduct, truly worthy a believer in Christ : yet a chearful participation of what God allots is not inconsistent with frugality, and is very commendable in such who are the favourites of providence. But while the Christian is using the things of this life, it should be his great concern to guard against giving into any excess, under the notion of relaxation of the mind, or health of body, or any other pretence whatever : believers should see to it, that they so use the world as not to abuse it, least they should seem to be *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God* : moderation in this respect has been the effect of divine grace in the souls of believers in all ages : where the word of God reaches with power, it sanctifies

sanctifies persons in this respect ; so it appeared when the Gospel begun to have its spread among the Gentiles and heathen nations, who were given to excesses of every kind : they, who were before licentious, being converted, became temperate and sober ; inasmuch that such who remained in an unregenerate state, thought it strange they did not run into *the same excess of riot* with others. [See 1 Peter iv. 3, 4.] Hence on account of some loose professors, and in order to evidence the purity of their conversation, the Apostle exhorts the *Romans* [chap. xiii. 13, 14.] *walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, &c. make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof ;* and many such like passages there are in the New Testament. Thus let temperance, sobriety, and chastity be evident to all that are about you ; that so, in this respect, your *moderation may be known unto all men.* We should labour to render this disposition and grace conspicuous in all our pursuits after, and enjoyment of worldly things.

I proceed now, as proposed, to consider how this moderation appears, or what are the evidences of such a spirit with regard to these instances relating to the world.

First, It appears in a strict regard to what is lawful and decent, with respect to the time and means laid out in the attainment, or use of the creature :

creature : a covetous or voluptuous man cannot be honest, his passionate fondness for the creature carries him beyond due bounds : he is frequently found injuring God and his fellow creatures in the gratification of his lusts, *i. e.* he breaks the laws of God and man ; rather than not indulge himself, he robs God of what he has constituted for his publick and visible honour in the world, and intrudes on his neighbours property. God has allotted us six days for labour, as a means of providing for the relief of the outward man : it is one of the sad consequences of the fall, to be reduced to a necessity of spending so much of our precious time to this purpose. But it is commanded, and highly reasonable, that some time should be set apart for God's service ; his own manifestative glory, and the welfare of our souls calls for it. How little moderation do they discover in this respect, who eagerly pursue the pleasures and profits of this life on the Lord's day, a part of the week which should be devoted to the publick worship of God ; and that go on in a perpetual revolution of business and pleasure from one week's end to another, in the neglect of religious duties, private and publick : some such there are, it is to be feared, who would yet think themselves greatly injured to be denied the name of Christians : And there are others, who, although they do not altogether absent themselves from the worship of God, yet
come

Chap. II. *to Christian moderation.* III

come so seldom, and are so backward and late in their attendance, that they are far from letting their moderation be known in this respect; a disposition to this evil of laying out that time which ought to be employed in the service of God and our souls in the pursuit of the world, is first discerned by a secret uneasiness under duty, wishing it were over, saying within ourselves, like the degenerate *Israelites*, *when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the ballances by deceit.* [*Amos viii. 5.*] Happy are they who by the grace of God are enabled to oppose and overcome such beginnings of folly in their hearts, for such desires prevailing will lead persons into all manner of impiety and prophaness.

Again, the means by which we obtain worldly things should be duly attended to, some of which are too often not equitable, or strictly just; for inordinate desires lead persons into unwarrantable measures; impiety towards God and injustice towards our neighbour usually go together. Thus those persons that wanted the sabbaths to be over that they might carry on their merchandize, were for shortening the measure, and lessening the weight; deceiving those they dealt with, and grinding the face of the poor, were the methods they took, as appears from the aforementioned passage; at least, worldly minded

minded persons do not by others as they would that others should do unto them.

But he is the man that discovers moderation, who will have nothing to do with the world any farther than what is consistent with his duty to God and man; and that while many are laying out, or wishing they could lay out the whole of their time in the business and entertainment of life, will find opportunity for the closet and the sanctuary: though others may take advantage of the ignorance or necessity of their neighbour, (the way in which too many heap up their wealth) he scorns these, or any such like mean and base methods, will rather submit to poverty than be guilty of these sinful practices. In a word, moderation is discovered in taking care that all the time we spend, the means we use for possessing or enjoying the world, be consistent with the rules of piety, justice, and honour.

Secondly, Tenderneſs and forbearance toward ſuch who are providentially indebted to us, is another evidence; moderation is directly levelled againſt ſeverity of every kind; the word carries in it a yielding, not going to the rigour of things; and this temper diſplays itſelf in mercy; not only juſtice, but goodneſs is recommended in our text, as has been obſerved in the explanation of it. It is not unbecoming, much leſs unlawful for a Chriſtian to ſue for his right, when unjuſtly detained from him; he is not to be charged with want

want of moderation, because he insists upon his property, appeals to the civil magistrate, or takes the benefit of such just laws as are enacted by him, who is the minister of God for the defence and security of such who live under his administration. If civil government be (as undoubtedly it is) of divine institution, it can be no reflection on the man that professes the fear of God, that he embraces the protection, and calls in the assistance of that ordinance of his, to prevent the designs of violent or unreasonable persons, who would either keep or take from him what providence has allotted him : this would be to disfranchise the believer from one of the principal advantages that arise from the powers appointed for the benefit of mankind, and expose him to the insults of those who are forward to shew their hatred to such whose conversation and profession is a continual reproach to their ignorance and vanity. But even in such lawful suits the Christian's moderation may find an opportunity of discovering itself, especially where unavoidable losses and disappointments, or perhaps imprudence, may have reduced our neighbour, and by reason of some relation or dealings he is our debtor. Moderation toward a fellow-creature in a state of poverty, under such obligation, (for others stand in no need of the bounty I speak of) I say compassion to one under such circumstances, is a good symptom that men are moderate in their pursuits after

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the things of this life : for a covetous man is generally cruel on such occasions, he will take his fellow by the throat and cast him into prison ; in vain shall his poor brother cry, *saying, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all* ; he will not hearken, will have no patience, but deliver him into the hands of the tormentors ; like that wicked ungrateful servant our Lord represents in the parable of him that had just received forgiveness of his Lord for a large sum, [*Matt. xviii. 23. to the end.*] This hard heartedness and rigorous treatment is very unworthy a person who professes to have been made a partaker of the love of God, and to be weaned from this world, in the view of free pardon, through the merit of the Redeemer's blood and eternal life in him ; yet some such instances there have been of men who call themselves Christians, whose tender mercies are cruelty, and who, though they profess to go to their Lord for the remission of manifold transgressions daily, scarce exercise a single instance of forgiveness in this respect, to the most deplorable of their fellow-creatures ; but with the utmost severity demand, and even take their bed from under them, or strip them of their garment : this violence and cruelty, under such circumstances, the grace of God teaches us to deny ; where corruptions are subdued, men are humbled and softened by the power of God's spirit ; and such will, and ought to let their moderation

deration be known to all, by their tender heartedness, long suffering, and compassion, even where they suffer much loss.

Thirdly, Generosity to the poor is another evidence; this is of the same species with the former, both may be included under the name of charity; but here I mean liberality to persons, exclusive of those circumstances, or abstracted from the consideration of the obligations of debt before mention'd; this is an instance of generosity as well as the other, and sometimes one and the same person may be the object of both: men have discovered their moderation in forgiving debts, and also bestowing something for the relief of the necessitous debtor; but these are distinct things, different fruits of love; the former is of a passive, this of an active nature; and most have a more frequent opportunity of shewing their moderation this way than the other.

It is a comfortable symptom of moderation, with respect to the things of life, when persons are ready to part with them on such occasions; for withholding assistance when we have it in our power, and see our brother in need, is a token of love to the world, and lays persons under a just suspicion of not having the love of God. [1 *John* iii. 17.] Such men are straightened, and their bowels shut up, through an over fondness for the world, but bounty and liberality are the genuine

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effects of sitting loose to the creature ; to be forward in disposing of what we are in possession of, for God's honour, and the good of those about us, is one method by which we are to let our moderation be known unto all men.

Fourthly, Resignation, under stripping dispensations of providence, is another evidence. When relations or substance are removed, it is a trial to us in the present state, but our moderation appears, if our sorrow (for sorrow is lawful and not sinful under such humbling changes) when God is pleased to deprive us of earthly comforts, is mingled with acknowledgments of the divine sovereignty, confessions of our ill deserts, and owning God's wisdom, justice, mercy, and goodness in all that he brings upon us ; if we do not repine, fret or murmur, but keep close to our duty, especially at the throne of grace, such conduct, under these humbling providences, is a comfortable evidence that the spirit of the Lord has enabled us to cast our care on him who careth for us : hence it is added, in the next verse to our text, *be careful for nothing : but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*

The man that is immoderate, hotly pursuing after worldly things, cannot bear with losses and disappointments, it makes him abject, disconsolate, irritates his corruptions, and fills him with loud complaints ; indeed it is taking away his
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idol, and what has he more? but the servant of the Lord exercises himself, under the influence of divine grace, with all humility and gentleness; is not so passionate in lamenting the loss of the creature; will not charge God foolishly, but rather with holy *Job*, say, *the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* [*Job* i. 21.] And thus resigning discovers his moderation to all about him.

Fifthly, Contentment with our lot, is another fruit and evidence of moderation, in which the true believer ought to shine: this evidence should be given by persons in all circumstances; the rich as well as the poor discover moderation by contentment; for so unsatisfying are riches, that the owners can never be contented therewith; desire increases with them, and it is frequently seen that the more men have, the more they covet. It may seem a more striking evidence of moderation to be satisfied with a little; *having food and raiment, therewith to be content*; [*1 Tim.* vi. 8.] but as no circumstances can satisfy him whose mind is given to earthly things; so a satisfaction with what providence allots, in any circumstance, is one symptom of moderation; those persons have learned to despise the world, and live loose to the creature, who are really satisfied and contented in every station; it was an high attainment the Apostle speaks of in the 11th and 12th verses of this chapter, wherein is our text, *I*

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have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content; I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; and his contentment in abundance was one discovery of the grace of God in him.

However, we are less prone to shew outward signs of discontent in prosperity than adversity; contentment with a little, has a tendency to render our moderation most conspicuous in the sight of our fellow creatures: and with respect to an opportunity of giving the evidence I am now speaking of, the poor Christian has the advantage of the rich one; altho' they may equally be satisfied with the heavenly Father's dispensations, and doubtless equally well pleasing to him. How satisfied are some believers with a short subsistence, a very little share of worldly things, while they are led by faith to converse with God as their heritage, through *Christ Jesus*? and how bright a discovery, do they give, by these means of their moderation, to the honour of him they trust? a small portion of the things of this life will satisfy the Christian who hath chosen God for his portion, when in a lively frame he can rejoice in this God, as possess'd of every thing necessary to his present comfort, and future happiness; discontent is a sad sign of inordinate affection, and of some deceitful lust domineering; but where the mind is regulated by the grace of God, humbled under a sense of its ill deservings,
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and enlightened into the vanity of the creature, there is a moderation which shews itself in a contentment with what providence allots, though it be but little.

Thus we have considered moderation with respect to the possession or enjoyment of earthly things: happy are they whose hearts are thus tempered by the grace of God, and, through his spirit, are enabled, after this manner, to let their moderation be known unto all men: these persons are instruments, under every circumstance, of glorifying God, and are beneficial to all around them; such a temper and conduct is most honourable in the sight of God and men; and such persons are most comfortable to themselves: but when we consider the powerful influence the world has upon us, while we are cloathed with flesh, and carry about with us a body of sin, how easily we are betrayed into covetousness, and so into impiety, injustice, cruelty, and discontent; we may well, after the example of the Apostles, cry earnestly to him from whom every good gift comes, and say, *Lord increase our faith*, for it is through the exercise of this grace alone, we can so overcome the world as to let our moderation, in these respects, be known unto all men.

C H A P. III.

Pointing out in what instances a Christian should discover moderation as a professor, and in the Church.

WE now come to consider how this exhortation is to be regarded by the believer as a professor, and in the church; and it should, I apprehend, be his great care to discover his moderation in the following particulars, *viz.*

First, In the opinion he forms of himself; this instance of moderation stands opposed to self-conceit, presumption, and contempt of others; men are very apt to be puffed up with their station, talents, and influence in a church of Christ: we are vain flattering creatures, and are too prone to abuse the best things bestowed upon us: it is a rare thing, even for good men, to excel in any thing without knowing it so well, as, by that knowledge, to give offence: the best of us, when distinguished, are apt to be exalted above measure, and sorrowful consequences have attended the spiritual pride of some professors of religion: this is owing to the remainder of corruption in some, and the dominion of it in others, who have the form indeed, but never felt the power of true Godliness. But the new nature is meek, humble, and, so far as it prevails, will keep

keep a man low in his own eyes, let him be dignified with never so high a station, or deck'd with never so many glittering talents; *Charity vaunteth not itself.* The Apostle *Paul* had this grace, *i. e.* honour and favour bestowed upon him, that he *should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*, and yet so humble an opinion had he of himself, he uses a very expressive figure to illustrate it, styling himself *less than the least of all Saints*; [*Ephes.* iii. 8.] yet this great believer was in danger of being too much lifted up, when favoured with an extraordinary vision and revelation, as appears from his own account; [*2 Cor.* xii.] a less peculiar favour will give us too high an opinion of ourselves, if the Lord is not pleased by some method to keep us humble: that person must have taken but little notice of himself or mankind, that has not been convinced of the universal proneness there is in every one to this evil; and this is too evident in the churches; among such that profess the name of Christ, an arrogant spirit appears in many: men are apt to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think; professors sometimes think they stand, because they have brighter talents, are in better outward circumstances, or have not been left to so great falls as some others; and when their vain minds dwell too much on these things, they grow lofty, careless, and disdainful; but let such know, God can, and will bring down their high looks. If
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any man thinketh himself to be something, *i. e.* something stronger, and better, in himself than others, he deceiveth himself; he will find a sad disappointment when God comes to try him, or permits satan to sift him: let *Peter* witness for this, let his fall, and the sorrowful consequences of it be a warning to us, that every one who *thinketh he standeth* may take heed lest he fall. [1 Cor. x. 12.]

We must have a sense of the distinguishing talents and favours God is pleased to bestow upon us, for without this we cannot be animated to thankfulness for, or diligence in the use of what is conferred; but our great concern ought to be, that we maintain a modest opinion of ourselves under any advantages; this is of great importance to the glory of God and our own usefulness; and it is proper to put one another in mind of this, according to the example of *Paul*. [Rom. xii. 3.] *For I say through the grace given to me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of Faith.* By this it plainly appears, the best are in danger of some degree of this evil, and that it should be the care of every Christian to watch against it, and labour to let his moderation be known unto all men with regard to the opinion he forms of himself.

Secondly,

Secondly, Another instance in which we should use great moderation, is, in respect to our peculiar sentiments concerning the mind of God revealed in his word, as to lesser matters especially, and things that have not been so clear in all ages with some of the most eminent believers; and there is a moderation to be discovered, and becoming the Christian, in his zeal for doctrines and ordinances which he thinks the plainest and of the greatest importance: but this is so to be understood, as not to throw the least stumbling block or discouragement in the way of a believer's zeal for the truths and ordinances of the Gospel, according to the light of his conscience. We are to *contend earnestly for the Faith*, and keep with a sacred diligence the holy institutions of our Lord; it is criminal to be luke-warm about them; and as the zeal itself is commendable and necessary, so the natural effects of this zeal must be allowed and applauded: a Christian's abiding strictly by the practice of what he apprehends to be the will of Christ, in meekness endeavouring to instruct others, and standing for the vindication of truth, when opposed, is not in the least inconsistent with this moderation; but it will be allowed, I believe, that even good men have been sometimes immoderate, and exceeded bounds in their conduct, with respect to some of the most important doctrines, and plainest ordinances: we are to take heed of our temper in the midst of
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our zeal : one great occasion of excess seems to be owing to the weakness of our minds in the present state, and their proneness to be partial; one or two particular topicks are too frequently the object of our attention; in pursuing after the reputation of these, other things are neglected of equal, if not greater importance; all the faculties are employed in establishing and promoting darling notions, which, however excellent in themselves, are far from challenging the whole of our regard : this fondness should be guarded against, in order to a compliance with what the Apostle recommends in our text, for where it is indulged, our corruptions subtilly intrude, mingle with our zeal, and we are overtaken by them into the exercise of resentment, anger, and reproach on the ignorant or perverse that differ from us, who ought rather to be the subject of our pity, compassion and prayers. Partiality, with respect to doctrines, makes way for the prevalency of our passions, and persecution of those who differ from us is sometimes the consequence : we should be upon our watch, for good men have been guilty; we ought to let our moderation be known unto all men by an uniform regard to the truths and institutions of the Gospel, and a gentle, tender disposition towards those who differ from us; in this state of imperfection we shall differ; while we hold fast and contend for what is right, let us take heed of falling into
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the spirit of the *Pharises* whom our Lord informs us *thought they had eternal life.* [*John v. 39.*] This thought was with an inward pride, conceit, and arrogance; as some have observed, the word really implies as though this blessing belonged to them alone: the best of us are subject to spiritual pride, nor can we keep our hearts with too much diligence in order to avoid it.

But especially in lesser and more doubtful matters, which have too often been the occasion of immoderate heats, men are apt to be betrayed into an undue temper about their private sentiments, to be fond of, and liable to warmth in favour of them; this is an evil every one decries, every one is ashamed of, when, upon reflection, he finds himself guilty; yet few, if any, can say they are innocent. It is a mercy we know any thing; but, considering we look through a glass darkly, and are so liable to mistake in things that are not expressly revealed, and even in these may sincerely differ in the sense of what is expressed, one would think it should moderate our tenaciousness for our own sentiments, at least be sufficient to prevent any anxieties on account of those subjects that are not of plain and lasting importance; yet for want of professors being gentle, patient and yielding with respect to these things, innumerable mischiefs have arisen to the people and church of God.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, We should discover moderation with respect to the censures we pass on others ; these often come too hastily, and are past without a just and becoming foundation, when persons are so left to think more highly of themselves than they ought, and violently fond of their particular notions. This may be applied to our censures in a collective capacity as a church ; error and heresy must be censured, Christians must bear their testimony against the conduct of an obstinate, immoral, prophane or disorderly person. When a delinquent is convicted of Apostacy in doctrine or in practice, the glory of Christ and the preservation of a community make it necessary (if he cannot be reclaimed by methods prescribed in the Gospel) that he be censured ; nor is it any token of true moderation for members of churches to withhold their concern in such censures : though many weakly absent on such occasions, under a pretence of charity ; but I think such are betrayed into an immoderate coldness toward their incumbent duty, the neglect of which tends to the impenitency of backsliders, and destruction of churches, with other fatal consequences they seem little aware of. However in these censures our moderation should appear, in using all those methods for recovering the wandering brother, and exercising all the compassion, the nature of the case, and the laws of Christ will admit of ; if this is carefully attended

tended to, there will be no just cause of complaint for want of moderation.

This may also be applied to private censures; the sentiments we form, the judgment we pass on others in our own private capacity; here great caution is to be used, for indeed we have little to do in this matter, yet our forward spirits are too apt to be intermeddling; censoriousness, evil surmisings, are what some professors are greatly guilty of; but this is highly unbecoming, we ought not to condemn on surmise: *Judge not, lest ye be judged*, says our Lord, such a spirit he foresaw would appear among those that called themselves his disciples, and enters that timely warning in the first sermon he preached. We should beware of hastily taking up a report against any, lest we falsely accuse any; or judge the estate of such who are justly purged out from the community of which once they were members. I think it is easy to see that an abatement or moderation in this respect is suited to the design the Apostle had in view, by the argument he uses; *The Lord is at hand*, i. e. coming to judgment, as I have shewn; and a very strong reason for modesty in this point, is to be taken from the near approach of the Lord to that awful business, as we shall have occasion hereafter to demonstrate. I proceed lastly:

Fourthly, We should be careful to discover moderation in the satisfaction we require of such
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that are fallen, have offended or injured : our Lord has told us it is impossible but that offences will come while churches are compiled of such who are in their individual capacity attended with imperfection, we cannot expect it to be otherwise ; these offences are permitted for the trial of our graces, and that they which are approved may be made manifest ; and our graces are to be exercised in our conduct toward them from whom they arise ; we are to be tender and shew a forgiving spirit, sin is not to be connived at under this pretence, a sense of which is requisite to passing by the fault : a profession of sorrow and repentance, evidenced by a reformation and restitution, is to be looked for. This repentance, as the circumstance of the case requires, is what reason and revelation both call upon us to seek after. If thy brother offend thee and return, *saying, I repent, i. e.* giving suitable tokens of repentance, *thou shalt forgive him.* [Luke xvii. 3.] But it is plain from that and many other exhortations in scripture, as well as from experience in all ages, that we are prone to carry, and some professors have carried their resentment too far, even so as to stumble, and discourage such who have obtained godly sorrow ; this was the case of the incestuous person who was cast out from the church at *Corinth* ; he was like to be overwhelmed with grief by the disregard the members paid to his sorrow on account
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of that crime for which he was so justly put away : his overtures (for we may reasonably suppose he made some for his restoration) were not accepted ; and thereby he was exposed, and brought to the confines of despair : perhaps these professors look'd for more than was required, or, it may be, possible, in order to his being readmitted. However, the like spirit has been evident in some communities with respect to members whose crime has been less scandalous ; our conduct in such an affair may exceed the demerit of the offence so far as it relates to us, and go beyond what our Lord has authorized in our dealings one with another : self, and our own humours and prejudices, too frequently creep into, and mix themselves in these transactions ; we ought not to be severe and rigorous, but deny ourselves, and be ready to receive a returning brother upon any safe and honourable terms.

But some professors have been left to such a spirit, with regard to such who have been guilty of private or public offences, as would give no heed to their intreaties and cries, when they sued for a reconciliation ; of this sort are those who insist on an acknowledgment of more guilt than the censured member is conscious of, although that guilt can never be positively proved but by the confession of the person charged therewith.

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Nor are we to be stumpled if some such like instances appear, since it is foretold, that men, under the form of godliness shall be lovers of *their own selves, proud, without natural affection, fierce, having their consciences seared with a hot iron.* [2 Tim. iii. 2. compared with 1 Tim. iv. 2.] And to this purpose also, the Apostle, writing to the Saints at *Ephesus*, bids them lay aside *all bitterness, wrath, anger, evil speaking, and malice.* [chap. iv. 31.] These prophecies and exhortations, and many such like, compared with some instances of the heat of some persons, when offended, prove that the best of societies, and particular members of those societies, are liable, if they watch not over their own spirits, to be cruel, unkind, and hard-hearted in their treatment of their fellow members; and, this is what we should, on every proper occasion warn one another against.

Such conduct is contrary to a Christian spirit; it becomes believers *to be kind, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake forgives them,* as the Apostle has directed in the beforementioned *Ephes.* iv. 32. We ought to comply with any thing that is not sinful, rather than not embrace a returning brother: We ought to shew how ready we are, in a spirit of meekness, to restore those who have been *overtaken with a fault*, rejoicing at their repentance, and thereby let our moderation be known unto all men.

C H A P. IV.

Containing evidences of moderation in religious life.

First, **A**Voiding all unnecessary contentions and disputes; where this moderation prevails, peace and quietness are found: this word is rendered gentle, *Titus* iii. 2. and, I think, stands opposed to brawling and noise (which some proud professors, who think highly of themselves, and are fond of their own opinions) are perpetually making; be *gentle*, says the Apostle, *shewing all meekness to all men*: the humble steady believer will not be afraid or ashamed to vindicate the truth, when struck at, or be backward, in meekness, to instruct those that are ignorant and out of the way, when he finds an opportunity: but he will not be litigious and contentious, the bad effect of a mean, conceited spirit, and which tends to no advantage. If the serious humble Christian speaks of his sentiments, he submits it to the sacred standard with meekness and candour; he is not for striving and fighting *about words to no profit*, which may offend, rather than convince and edify those that differ from him. Whoever reads the polemical writings of some who are now entered into an eternal state, once zealous here, and observes many

books, and much conversation in the present day, may easily see that this is a sort of moderation that has been, and is greatly wanted.

Secondly, It shews itself in speaking kindly to, and of one another ; when persons are immoderate, and heated with their passions, they are prone to bitterness of expression ; their words are like drawn swords, for lust whets the tongue like that bloody instrument ; hence says the Apostle, [*Gal. v. 15.*] *but if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another* ; hard names and provoking language is usually found, where professors are striving in a carnal spirit : they break one another to pieces with words, and are very severe in their conversation : accordingly, when stirred up to be *gentle*, agreeable to the beforemention'd passage, [*Titus iii. 2.*] it is prefaced with this exhortation, among others, *Speak evil of no man* ; great offences come by words, and binding of the tongue is an instance of great spiritual wisdom ; whereas he that doth not do it, is sharply rebuked. [*James i. 26,* compared with chap. iii. ver. 2.] But where the moderation I am speaking of prevails, tale-bearing, backbiting, reproach, evil insinuations, and such like devilish methods, which break in upon the peace, and prevent the edification of God's people, cease ; and there will be love in word and in tongue, as well as in deed and in truth.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, It discovers itself in suffering wrong, rather than in hindering godly edification: such who are in this spirit will give and yield in many instances in order to preserve peace; it is melancholly to observe how trifling a matter sometimes destroys the harmony that once subsisted between professors, and spreads itself it may be to the dividing a community; but where moderation prevails, self-denial will be exercised, especially in worldly matters; *why do ye not suffer wrong?* says *Paul* to the *Corinthians*: such indeed will suffer no sin, but they will suffer much sorrow, put up with many inconveniencies in order to promote unity and usefulness: this charity covereth a multitude of infirmities; the person in whom it abounds will not be rigorous and severe in this respect; but the substance of these things we have been obliged to hint at under some former particulars, therefore I pass on,

Fourthly, Praying for, and walking with such who differ from us, as far as our consciences will let us, is another evidence of moderation in the church. Christians are not, under a specious pretence of moderation, to give up a tittle of the truth, or to dispense with an ordinance of *Jesus Christ*: faithfulness to my Lord and master, and charity to my christian brethren, who differ from me in some points, may surely consist together; to suppose the contrary, is to make moderation consist in luke-warmness, or indeed a criminal negligence of our duty:

but men are not to violate their consciences out of tenderness to any man, nor is any cruelty to ourselves necessary to a spirit of candour towards others, under a profession and in religious matters. He that believes the blood of Christ was shed as a proper atonement for the sins of God's people, and a price paid into the hands of divine justice for the redemption of the elect, is by no means to be reputed an uncharitable man, because he firmly adheres to these doctrines, and will not give into those sentiments that are inconsistent with God's having chosen a peculiar people to himself, for whom he delivered up his Son, who by his sufferings made reconciliation for their souls; without admitting liberty and boldness for what a person believes to be truth, as every way agreeable to moderation, there can be no zeal or steadfastness in any profession whatever. The like may be said of the order and institution of Christ's churches. If I believe Christ has commanded any thing necessarily prerequisite to the fellowship of a visible body of Saints in communion, and a participation of the privileges of his house, I must abide by my conscience in this point till I am otherwise convinced, and keep the ordinances with care and diligence, as I think they are delivered by our Lord to his Apostles, and by them to his churches, without any slavish fear of being charged with an immoderate, uncharitable spirit; charity

charity is no enemy to a free enquiry after truth, nor a firm attachment to it, when persuaded of it. He that censures such a person, either discovers a want of understanding, or of moderation in himself.

But there is a want of moderation, when my zeal for a truth or ordinance of Christ betrays me into a jealousy, or surmising against the sincerity of his love to Christ, and faith in him, who differs from me, though in articles that are not absolutely inconsistent with either; when it indisposes me to join with him in those things, in which our light agrees; when it slackens my desires after his further knowledge in the truth; when this is my frame, there is reason to fear some perverse passion prevails, some subtle lust has joined my zeal, and that I want this moderation so lovely and necessary in the Christian life; for if I thought soberly of myself, I should be willing to exercise my talents for the benefit of all that profess the fear of God, though they may differ professedly in some things, yet shall be glad *to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same things*, as far as we have already mutually attained; and wherein any are otherwise minded, to pray and hope God will reveal unto them what they are yet unacquainted with, and even to desire their perfection in knowledge: this was the temper of the Apostle, as appears from the 15th and 16th verses of the chapter preceeding

our text, *let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you ; nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* I think it is evident that the Apostle had a concern for, and a desire after the instruction of such who were deficient in their knowledge, and also cheerfully walk'd with them in those things in which their light agreed ; the same disposition and conduct will discover itself where persons are in a true spirit of Christian moderation.

Fifthly, It discovers itself by being ready to own, and heartily to rejoice in the grace, gifts, and usefulness which others are favoured with. Considering the pride and selfishness of our spirits, this is none of the least difficult part of our duty ; we have need of great grace to moderate and model our minds into a conformity to this amiable temper and disposition. The scripture saith not in vain, *the spirit that is in us lusteth to envy ; i. e.* our own depraved spirits. He must be a stranger to his own heart that knows nothing of this criminal disposition ; it appeared among our Lord's disciples themselves on various occasions, nor have there been wanting instances of this kind in all ages. It is a sign of great carnality when we are immoderately fond of ourselves, and displeased at the increasing light and usefulness of others, yet how frequently has
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this been the case. The well-known instance of *Joshua* is too lively a picture of the inclination and behaviour of too many professors ; when *Eldad* and *Medad* prophesied in the camp, it gave umbrage to his hasty, passionate, and zealous mind ; who being young and warm in his spirit, and jealous of the honour of *Moses*, desired that servant of the Lord to interpose with his authority and forbid them. [*Numbers* xi. 28, 29.] This proceeded from an unruly passion, as appears from the answer of that humble leader of God's people, *enviest thou for my sake?* And what an example of modesty and moderation does the meekest of the sons of men set before us in the following declaration ; *would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them !*

It was grievous for *John's* disciples to see our Lord advance in his reputation and usefulness, and to increase in the number of his followers ; but their master could with the greatest pleasure and joy, say, *he must increase, but I must decrease.* But where there is a want of moderation, there is a grudging, *Isaiab* l. 9. *Grudge not one against another.* On the contrary, the believer influenced by grace, can, and will take notice of, own, admire at, and rejoice in what others are enabled to do for the honour of God, agreeable to the exhortation. [*Philip* ii. 4.] *look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

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others. The Apostle I think is clearly shewing that they, as a proof of their love and humility, should prefer each other more than themselves; consequently acknowledge the credit, and be pleased with the talents and success others were distinguished with; which they, in a carnal spirit, and being given to vain glory, were backward to do. Such who have a true spirit of moderation, will find a constraint on their minds to thank God when they hear of, or behold the increase of grace, gifts, and usefulness of every private member, minister, or particular community of Saints; having a desire to see the interest of Christ flourish in every heart, by every hand, and among all denominations of people that love and fear his name. This is the fruit of that humbling principle that enriches the heart with unfeigned affection to Christ and his members, and the noblest generosity; for this charity *enzyeth not*. Our moderation therefore will be made manifest by rejoicing at the success and fruitfulness of others.

Sixthly, To what I have already said, I would further add, that I apprehend a steadfastness in our profession is another evidence of moderation. I mean a continuance for many years in the same church: but this continuance in a community of Saints is hardly attainable, where the moderation we speak of does not in some good measure prevail; the best of persons and communities are
imperfect,

imperfect; offences will arise, but these offences a man of immoderate warmth cannot away with. A professor that thinks highly of himself, is over tenacious of his private sentiments, forward to censure, backward to forgive, meets with many things to offend him; this causes him to run from one place to another; you may trace him in a few years through many communities, till at length (still finding too much exercise for his unruly spirit) it is much if there be a collection of Saints on earth fit for him to join with. Patience and self-denial are necessary to steadiness. A person indeed may, in an indolent, careless way, lie sleeping with little better than a name in a church for a long season; this is no evidence of his grace: but where a person attends his profession with zeal and affection, and is diligent in the several duties of his station in the house of God, his maintaining his place in one congregation twenty, thirty, or forty years, seems a great proof of moderation; for such must have been tried by various circumstances and tempers. In every community, moderation is requisite to steadiness, and therefore moderation is discover'd by a person's settledness, under a profession of the name of Christ in the manner described.

Thus, peace and love, self-denial and humility, rejoicing at the prosperity of others, and a steadiness in our profession, are good indications of moderation; all these are highly incumbent on
every

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every one that professes the name of Christ, or that would be thought his disciples, for many reasons. But that which the Apostle calls us to the consideration of, in my text, is that *the Lord is at hand, i. e.* in a little time the Lord *Jesus Christ* will certainly make his second appearance, according to his promise, and the declaration of his word. This naturally brings me to the other general proposition, *viz.* To offer some reasons why the certain and speedy appearance of Christ should promote this spirit of moderation, and allay those sinful passions that make head against it.

C H A P. V.

Arguments from the certain and sudden appearance of Christ to judgment, to christian moderation.

BY the manner of the Apostle's introducing this assertion, it is plain that there is something laid up in this truth, which, if duly attended to, will promote the temper and moderation he exhorts unto: many arguments might be used, from the state of imperfection we are in; our being, through ignorance, liable to mistake, exposed to temptations, and, consequently, to stand in need of the moderation of others; but the

the peculiar argument urged here by the Apostle is, *The Lord is at hand.* The force of which lies, I apprehend, in these two particulars. (1) The dignity of the person. (2) The design or consequence of his coming.

First, Then who is this person? what motives to moderation arise from the consideration of *him* that is coming with *so much expedition*? The excellency of this grand person referred to in our text, may justly strike us with awe and reverence, and excite us to watchfulness against those lusts, the gratification of which, moderation stands opposed to.

First, He is no less than truly and properly God, he is a divine person, he is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, *which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* [Revelations i. 18.] This undoubtedly is spoken of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, whose revelation this is expressly said to be, in verse 1, and who is described in the glories of his person, as mediator, in the following verses, and is the Lord that is to come, or who, according to our text, *is at hand*; which is further confirmed by comparing these passages with the last chapter of the same book, verse 20. *He which testifieth these things, saith, surely I come quickly. Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.* These things taken together, amount to a full proof of our blessed Saviour's true and proper divinity; since, in the first mentioned place, there are clearly attributed to his excellent person,

person eternity and omnipotency, which are incommunicable properties of the divine nature; and where either of these, or any other divine perfection is found, it is a proof of the divinity of him who is said to be possess'd of it; for the perfections of the divine nature are inseparable, there cannot be one but there must be all. They who are enemies to the divinity of Christ may well be under a temptation to question, or deny the authority of this book of revelation, for in it, especially in this first chapter, it is most plainly express'd: a man must discover great prejudice indeed that will assert omnipotence is not a perfection peculiar to God, and if so, that it is not blasphemy to attribute it to a creature; who can justly deny that in this place this perfection is ascribed to the Lord *Jesus Christ*? If therefore he is no more than a creature, how excellent and glorious soever, this book, or those passages in it which expressly attribute omnipotency to Christ, cannot be from God, for God can do nothing against himself, *he cannot deny himself*, or be the author of the revelation which ascribes that to a creature which belongs to him alone; this would be a foul reproach to him, and for ever sully his glory. Whoever thinks this is consistent with the divine nature, I apprehend there is no great hope of convincing them by reason; and shall only add, their God is not the God of *Abraham, Isaac or Jacob,*

Jacob, who is the only true and living God. The God whom we worship neither can, nor will, admit of any such thing; for thus he has declared by his servant the prophet *Isaiab*, chap. xlii. 8. *I am LORD or Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another; neither my praise to graven images.*

I now return to the observation already made, that this person our text speaks of, is a divine person; the perfections of whose nature, therefore, may justly make us tremble at the thoughts of being found indulging our passions: sobriety and temperance sure become a creature in the presence of his creator: while the covetuous or voluptuous man in the world is breaking the sabbath, plundering and over-reaching his neighbour to increase his store, or violating the laws of chastity and temperance to gratify his sensual appetite, there is a secret flattery prevailing in the mind that God is at a distance; *How doth God know?* is the language of a prophane and impious worldling, while he lays the reins on the neck of his lusts: when men, under a profession, are proud and hard hearted, conceited and censorious, 'tis while they have no serious apprehension of the divine presence on their minds.

If, when men are tempted to the indulgence of any lust, covetousness, sensuality, pride, or cruelty, they were to believe and seriously consider, that they are liable, even before they execute
their

their designs, to be set in the presence of him who is a being of perfect righteousness and purity, infinite wisdom and strict justice, there is reason to conclude they would not so easily be taken in the snare of the adversary.

Secondly, Another argument arises from the character and office, joined to the orders of this glorious person, who is no less than the true and proper Son of the living God, the relation he stands in to us, *viz.* That of the sovereign Lord and proprietor of us all, who has commanded and required moderation from every one of us: he has a natural right equal with the father; his government and authority are indisputable; this arises from his divine nature; but under this head he is to be considered in the character of mediator: for it is in this character he will appear at his second coming, which our text refers to, and says *is at hand*. As mediator he is a head of government in his church, and Lord over his house, *a prince and a Saviour*; all power is given to him in heaven and earth; he that saves us is our law-giver and our king; and they that expect to have any benefit by his sacrifice, must bow to his sceptre: this our Lord, in point of personal presence, considered in his human nature, is at a distance, has been absent for a time, but has left it in commission, and charge to his disciples, that they *mind not earthly things*, that they be not censorious, revengeful, or make
any

any *provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*; and when he returns (which it seems will be speedily) he expects to find such who have called themselves his servants, to have been obedient to his will. *Hypocrites*, whose ungodly lives and conversations are a grief to the saints, and a reproach to the name they bear, they say in their hearts *the Lord delayeth his coming*; they indulge themselves in infidelity, think *the Lord is slack concerning his promise*, and that good men have been mistaken: hence they are wanton and cruel; such a temper and conduct our Lord has represented unto us. The wicked servant, he shews us, will say in his heart, *my Lord delayeth his coming*; and the consequence is to abuse the servants of his house, and abandon himself to licentiousness. [*Matt.* xxiv. 49. compared with *Luke* xii. 45.] This Lord, who as he is possess'd of almighty power, so he has the right of judgment, and to execute vengeance on such who rebel: what wise servant would not be careful to avoid that which his Lord forbids, and to whom he knows he is accountable; whom he is certain will shortly appear, and indeed is at the very point of coming? This is the character of him, of whom our text speaks, he is God's king on his *holy hill of Zion*; to whom every believer is accountable, and of whom he requires heavenly mindedness in the world; peace, and love, and tenderness in the church. If Christians were under a due concern

for their honour and comfort, and did more realize the appearance of this their Lord and master, whose commands are so holy, so directly levelled against sin of every kind, they would be ashamed or afraid to be loose, froward and contentious, in their conversation : the relation, authority and injunctions of him that is to come, render his near approach a strong argument to moderation. To which I would subjoin,

Thirdly, The temper and conduct of Christ whose followers and subjects we profess to be : a conformity to Christ's image is of great importance, and without which we can never see his face with comfort ; this lies in the work of sanctification, but must and will discover itself in fruits of modesty, patience, &c. He that is our Saviour and king, is our example and pattern, and he was a person, considered in his human nature when here on earth, of great moderation ; *learn of me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly in heart.* [Matt. xi. 29.] He fought not after the honours and profits of this world, though under great temptations from Satan, and ignorant men ; but he poured a holy contempt on all that could be offered him, as inconsistent with his grand design : happy and honourable are they that can so do, when it stands in competition with the glory of God.

He was exceeding temperate as to the use and enjoyment of what providence afforded him.

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It is true indeed, he did not lead so abstemious a life as his fore-runner ; he did not reservedly confine himself to a desert wilderness, but shew'd himself openly and freely, partook of many persons bounty ; frequently attending feasts, where he had designs of love and grace ; but upon all these occasions, his temperance and sobriety were conspicuous. The malice of his enemies slandered him with being a gluttonous man and wine-bibber, but without the least foundation ; for he was undefiled in this as well as in every other respect, and was able to challenge these very men to prove him guilty of any one sin. He was also patient, humble, meek, of a tender forgiving spirit, not given to revenge, but *when he was reviled, reviled not again* ; all this is wonderful clear throughout the whole of his life. This consideration renders his approach a great argument for moderation ; he is in all these things an example ; the same mind ought to be in us as there was in him, agreeable to what the author of this epistle observes, chap. ii. verse 5. As we hope through his rich grace, and infinite merits, moderation shall be exercised towards us, and that we shall not be dealt with according to our deserts, we ought to conform to the same temper and disposition, as knowing this meek and holy person will shortly come ; and the more we are like him, the greater reason to expect acceptance

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with him when he appears. The thoughts of meeting a lord and master who has given such proofs of his disposition to, and delight in moderation, must needs influence to a spirit of moderation; for what wise and ingenuous servant will not be careful that he is not found in a spirit and behaviour contrary to his master's mind? all prudent subjects and servants consult the genius of their prince and master, if they understand or regard their honour and happiness at his appearance: under such an expectation, every person that knows his interest will be endeavouring to be found conformable to him that comes. The importance of being acceptable to Christ at his coming, is supposed in this warning or notice of his approach; otherwise there would be no pertinency in the observation; this being the case, the moderation of Christ animates the believer to exercise himself after this manner, in expectation of his appearance; for likeness to him naturally encourages the hope of being accepted by him; and answerable to what I am now speaking, I apprehend is what the Apostle says, [1 John iv. 17.] *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* From whence I think it is plain, that the believer's conformity to his Lord, is one reason of his confidence in relation to his acceptance and honour at that solemn season.

Thus

Thus the truth here asserted becomes a strong motive to the duty exhorted to, from the consideration of the dignity, authority, and disposition of the great and glorious person, even the Lord *Jesus*, who is thus coming quickly. His perfections as God, his kingly office as mediator, joined to his orders and commands, together with his own disposition and example, are strong arguments with such who believe in him, and hope for salvation through him, and acceptance with him, when he appears, to let their moderation be known unto all men. What is said on another occasion, may well be applied to what has now been insisted on, *viz.* seeing we look for such a person, one so glorious, with whom we have so important a concern, and who has discovered such a temper in himself, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?* How careful should we be to be found by him in a spirit of moderation? Thus much for the person; we proceed to the second general head, *viz.*

To shew the strength of the argument, as it may be urged from the design and consequence of Christ's coming.

There are divers considerations to be taken from hence to awaken our attention to the advice given. His coming, we have already

shewn, is to judgment, according to *James* v. 9. where the Apostle inculcates the same duty from the same argument, tho' in other words ; *be patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh ; i. e.* his coming to judgment ; since it is added in the next verse, *behold the judge standeth before the door ;* that is, this Lord is just ready to appear to judgment. Christ came once *to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,* and thereby to lay a foundation for that joy and triumph we have seen the true believer always has in him ; but his second coming, which our text refers to, will be for the execution of judgment, for the publick trial and final determination of the state of every individual person that has despised and disobeyed his Gospel ; *when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.* This is a truth of revelation ; the scriptures acquaint us not only with the fact, but a variety of particular circumstances are therein plainly laid down, which are to our present purpose. The approach of this season brings along with it several considerations, which, if duly weighed, must needs abate our affections for, and concern about temporal things ; quiet the mind of the Christian under the darkest providences ; and, in the hand of the spirit of God, mortify those passions that are apt to discover themselves in the forgetfulness of it ; which may appear from the following particulars.

First,

First, Then, it is to be observed, that at the time referred to, the earth, with all its inhabitants, and the things of it shall be done away; when this Lord, who is at hand, appears, there will be a general consummation of the present state of things; heaven and earth shall pass away in this sense; this is clearly revealed in scripture. See the account the Apostle *Peter* gives of it; [2d Epist. iii. 7.] *But the heavens and the earth, which are now by the same word, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment; verse 10. The heavens (says he) shall pass away with a great noise, and the element shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.* Thus you see every thing will be dissolved, nothing remain; there will be no place found for any son or daughter of *Adam*, but around *Christ's* throne, or at his bar. The whole frame of nature must pass under this dissolution; the pillars of the earth not shaken only, but removed away; then all the glory of the creature will depart and vanish. Now is such a season at hand; how foolish then must it be, and unreasonable, to be fond of these perishing things? Surely this is a strong argument for a holy indifferency towards, and sober use of the creature, according to [1 Cor. vii. 31.] *use this world as not abusing it; i. e. by an inordinate pursuit and intemperate indulgence of any person or thing in it we stand related to; for the fashion of this*

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world (adds he) *passeth away* ; it is all gradually declining, and tending that way now ; but when this our Lord appears, who is at hand, there will be a final period put to the grace, order, and beauty of the present constitution of things ; every thing we are apt to be so taken up with now, will then be done away for ever.

This being the case, what ignorance and stupidity is it for persons to stretch a point of conscience, commit any known evil, or withhold any good, for the sake of enlarging their store ? or, as many, to spend the whole of their time to perpetuate their names on large estates or magnificent buildings ? The Psalmist [*Psalm* xlix. 11.] shews us that worldly minded persons, such who are immoderately set upon these things, are labouring and toiling with such a view. *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations ; they call their lands by their own names.* Such are very inattentive to the course of divine providence, and experience of all ages. In time, we find the names of the wicked rot, and their works perish ; but when we come to consider the end of all things as very near, plainly asserted in God's sacred revelation, how vain is their ambition, and how fruitless are their attempts ? since, after all they have done, their names shall be written in the dust, and their labours of vanity be, at longest, very shortly fewel for the general conflagration.

conflagration. The shortness and uncertainty of our own individual lives, that we know not but this night the son of man may come by his messenger death, and require our souls at our hands, is a weighty argument for moderation to all persons ; yet the transitory state of universal nature, in its present frame, which will have its period and destruction at this coming of Christ our text refers to, seems more powerful to wean us from these present enjoyments, as it determines not in our own persons, but reaches futurity in this world, and affects every worldly view after our decease. Many excuse, particularly, their eager pursuit after the possession of this world's good, by pretences of advantage to their children, relations, and such that are to come after them : a due care is to be taken in moderation, with regard to those whom providence has made it our duty to provide for ; but some persons are guilty of impiety, injustice, and cruelty, in order to *amass substance for their babes* ; and others spending too much of their time and thoughts in this view, are betrayed into a neglect of many ordinances, and relative spiritual duties ; and this is their foolish pretence, for it can be called no better, if the word of God be true which we now have under consideration. Persons do not cordially embrace this truth, if it does not moderate their earthly affections, and worldly cares. If men who are thus inordinate, were to consider,

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time is short, not only with respect to themselves, but also that the latest generation of their posterity will soon pass away ; they would scarce think it worth their while to use any unlawful methods, or lay out the best of their thoughts for attaining or possessing worldly things. The coming of our Lord is an argument for moderation, because at his coming there will be an end of all things, as appears from that fore cited ; 1 *Peter* iv. 6, 7. compared with 4th and 5th of the same chapter. If we obtain these things, and stifle the convictions of our conscience through all the laborious pursuit, they will stand us in no stead in the day of judgment, for they shall wax old and perish. These things that now steal our hearts away from God, and betray us into covetousness, and the train of vices that follows it, will vanish and be forgotten ; when those sins committed in the pursuit of them, will be remembered in the day of judgment, to our shame and sorrow ; which leads,

Secondly, To observe that at the Lord's appearance we are every one to be brought into judgment. *We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.* [*Rom.* xiv. 10.] It has already been proved when our Saviour comes a *second time*, he will come in the character of a judge ; and here we are to take notice, that no one shall be able to escape the scrutiny, or be discharged from attending his awful tribunal seat ; this, is an argument

argument against every degree of sin. Men may find plausible excuses to their fellow creatures for their conduct, when they secretly betake themselves to mean and base methods in pursuit after the world, and colour their actions from those that are about them here: they may keep within compass, or subtilly evade the execution of human laws; but the day is at hand, in which they must be judged by him that knows all the secret springs of actions, and clearly discerns all the motives and methods of proceeding in this life. This truth forbids excess in the enjoyment of creatures; for we shall give an account of every thing done in the body, whether it be good or evil; 'tis plain the doctrine of Christ's being ready to judge the quick and the dead, is very strong against licentiousness of every kind; and, among other truths, is revealed, that we should no longer live to the indulgence of any lust. See 1 *Peter* iv. and the first seven verses. They who seriously believe this grand and awful truth, will not run into the same excess of riot with others; since this is against censoriousness, contempt, rashness, or injurious treatment of our brother, under a profession, as appears from the scope of the Apostle in the xivth of *Romans*.

When men indulge their passions, and gratify their lusts, they don't know, *i. e.* don't seriously consider, that for these things God will bring them into judgment; and the putting this afar
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off in their thoughts, is what gives occasion to indwelling sin to exert itself; hence, through the corruption of our hearts, the delay of the execution of God's threatenings emboldens many to the most deliberate acts of rebellion against him; sin proudly and basely takes the advantage of the forbearance of heaven. But let sinners know, he that is appointed to *judge the world in righteousness, is at hand*, he is ready even at the door; therefore there is no foundation for arguing from the distance of this awful season, when we must give an account, even for every idle word, to the allowance of any excess, as the devil and corrupt nature would insinuate: when tempted to sin may we always remember it, let this be our answer, and spiritual weapon of defence, *viz. The Lord is at hand*. We know not how soon the trumpet may blow, and the tremendous fore-runners of the judges coming may appear. If this was more consider'd, and made the subject of our daily meditation, under a divine blessing, it would prevent the influence of many temptations.

Thirdly; At the coming of the Lord, all persons and things will be clearly revealed and laid open; there will be no longer a doubt, what is truth, or who is true; it is *the day of revelation*, nothing shall, or can be concealed; not only God's wrath, but the sins of men, the deserving cause of it will be revealed; we are told *God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*; [Rom. ii. 16.]

16.] every thing shall be unravelled and set forth in a true and proper light ; no person shall stand disguised, but evidently appear to be what he really is ; this may, in some measure, arise to our view, on looking back to the last particular, wherein we observed every one is to be judged by this Lord, who knows the secret springs of actions ; truth and fact must evidently be made known, in order to a right judgment of persons and things ; and since the judge is no less than the glorious person we have seen he is, and capable of discerning the most hidden councils of the mind, by virtue of his omniscience ; there is no room to doubt the justness of every appearance before him. But I mention this circumstance distinctly, because it has, if duly attended to, a very powerful influence to moderate our zeal when it advances too far, as I have shewn it may, and promote patience and forbearance under jealousies and doubts.

We should remember there is not a secret infirmity of our own, but we may expect to be made naked and bare at this awful tribunal ; and if we are mistaken, or should be imposed on by any, when Christ comes, which will be in a very little time, every thing will be set to rights ; if this were duly weighed, men would not be so highly conceited of themselves ; nor appear so furious on every contradiction in sentiment, about lesser matters. They would not be so forward

ward to censure the hearts of men, or their state Godward; nor would they be so strict in their demands of satisfaction upon offences; for in all these immoderate exercises here, there will be found, upon examination, certain prepossessions and prejudices concerning our own superior knowledge, and right apprehension of things, our own authority, and the certainty of persons and things being as we apprehend them: there is a great deal of pride and arrogance lies at the bottom of such a temper and conduct; but we should consider we are liable to many errors, and that we cannot be absolutely certain of the state of those who are about us; when this day of the Lord comes we shall clearly *discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.*

The truths of the Gospel necessary to salvation are plainly revealed, these are to be firmly stood by and contended for when opposed; with respect to the discipline of God's house, we have rules, how far to go with our christian brethren under every defection, either in doctrine or practice, and when to restore them to our fellowship and communion, which we ought faithfully to attend to, according to the light of our consciences. We are likewise to remember the spirit and temper in which we are to exert our zeal is clearly pointed out, it is to be done in love and with meekness: if we go any farther, or pursue things

things in any different spirit, these excesses shew we forget *the Lord is at hand*, to whom judgment and vengeance belongs, and that when he comes, all things must, and shall be revealed before him: in this, the wise and humble Christian rests; when he can go no farther, consistent with the rules of moderation, he is gentle in meekness, endeavouring to instruct those that oppose themselves, to restore and enlighten backsliden, benighted souls, and if he finds he is not apparently successful, he patiently resigns. If he meets with ingratitude and ill treatment, as many do in their faithful and affectionate discharge of their duty, he forbears, and when he is reviled, will not revile again. Thus it moderates the believer's judgment and conduct, who, though now he sees *through a glass darkly*, then shall *see face to face*, and things shall be no longer in disguise, but appear as they really are: a very considerable motive to moderation is this, especially if we add,

Fourthly, That then all the wicked shall be recompensed, whether persecutors or hypocrites, which is also a strong argument to patience and forbearance. It is our duty to use means appointed for edification and the manifestative glory of God when call'd to it, but we have no occasion to indulge any passion or excess, nor are we under any temptation to exceed the bounds our Lord has set, lest sinners escape their deserts; this

this is the time appointed to execute judgment on the ungodly ; [*Jude xv.*] Some good men have acted in their zeal, as if they had been executioners of divine justice ; *but God has said vengeance is mine, I will repay ;* [*Rom. xii. 19.*] he has fixed the time for it, viz. at the second coming of his Son, to whom he has committed all judgment, and this season is not far off ; for our text tells us *the Lord is at hand*, and when he comes he will reward them that hate him, and those who offend his faithful disciples ; this should quiet and make our minds patient, however these enemies for a while may be permitted to prevail : to this purpose the Apostle writing to the *Thessalonians*, who were in great tribulation from ungodly men, says [*2 Thess. i. 6, 7, 8, 9.*] *seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ; but he adds, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* It seems plain from the preceeding verses, that the consideration of this promoted their patience under the many sorrows and persecutions they endured.

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Great moderation respecting resentment upon injuries received, and judgment passed upon persons with regard to their sincerity, would be exercised, if we considered, that in a little time he will come whom none can deceive, and who will recompence the wicked ; for before him *the proud shall be as stubble*. Our fretfulness and impatience often prevail when under oppression, and in the view of the prosperity of the wicked, for want of duly considering the shortness of their reign and rage, or how certain and soon God will reward them according to their works ; hence the Psalmist argues for patience and moderation from this truth, viz. That the wicked *shall be soon cut down and wither as the grass* ; i. e. be punished and destroyed. [*Psalm xxxvii. 2d and 38th verses compared.*] Men usually abate their passions and resentment even against criminals, by whom they suffer, when they know they are condemned, and will be shortly executed : if we consider the time is at hand when all wicked persons shall, as in a moment, be brought into desolation, and utterly consumed with divine terrors ; though we hate their crimes, and suffer by their pride and violence, yet we see great reason to pity and pray for their persons ; and such considerations greatly conduce to a patient and moderate spirit on various accounts.

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Fifthly,

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Fifthly, Add to this, in the last place, that at the time spoken of in our text, the glory and happiness of those who are the humble followers of the Redeemer shall be compleat. This is the season for rewarding the righteous, as well as punishing the wicked; the honour to be conferr'd on the saints at the coming of Christ, is a great argument to holiness and moderation; now the believer may meet with insolence and ingratitude, shame and reproach, from an ignorant, scoffing generation; neither his innocence nor his modesty can defend him from the malice of the world; and even from some who profess themselves to be followers of Christ, he may find the more he loves, the less he is beloved: but when his Lord appears, who *is at hand*, the meek believer shall be sufficiently made amends for all his self-denial, in abstaining from those gratifications that stood in competition with the glory of God, and the testimony of a good conscience; in suffering wrong, rather than break the peace of the Saints, or expose the cause of Christ to the scorn and rage of its enemies; as too many, under a profession, have done, and some still do, striving and contending with all the seeming eagerness of ignorant, carnal persons.

The nearness of that glory to be revealed on the disciples of Christ, has a tendency to raise their affections to heavenly things, and to promote a spiritual conversation; this will, under the

Chap. V. *to Christian moderation.* 163

the blessing of God, animate the Christian to the mortification of his lusts, and the exercise of his graces; thus *Colos. iii.* at the beginning, the Apostle exhorts us to *set our affections on things above*, and to mortify the members which are on the earth; in order to which, he leads them to consider their calling, and implantation in Christ, as their vital head, and subjoins this for their encouragement; *when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory*, verse 4. To the same purpose it is evident, from the 20th verse of the chapter before this, in which is our text, that the believer exercises moderation under this consideration; *for our conversation is in heaven, whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body*, &c. verse 21. The thoughts of shining with this Lord at his coming, occasioned their behaving themselves like citizens of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, in opposition to worldly mindedness, and inordinate affections; as though he should say, “our citizenship, our manners, deportment, and conduct, are with the indifferency of pilgrims and strangers, who know they are not at home; this is not our rest, nor is any thing we enjoy by the way, though useful for a season, our portion.” Thus *Abraham* and others, returned not to the enjoyment of their former possessions, it being inconsistent with the profession of their faith in God,

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though they had an opportunity of so doing; because they desired a better country, and look'd for a city their God had prepared for them; [*Heb. xi. 14, 15, and 16 verses.*] and a lively apprehension through faith in God's word, with respect to this glory that shall then be revealed, hath, in all ages, had such an influence on true believers.

The consideration of the approach of Christ, on these and such like accounts, tends to awaken the Christian from a sleepy frame, and sets him a longing after him: the wise virgins when they heard the voice, saying, *behold the Bridegroom cometh*, arose and trimmed their lamps, and prepared themselves to enter in. Christians forget their Lord is near, when they lie sleeping on the bed of carnal security, and indulge their lusts; it is urged therefore to the *Romans*, chap. xiii. verse 11. That they avoid every thing immoderate, and be diligent in fruits of love and holiness; that their salvation hastened on; knowing, says the Apostle, *that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; i. e.* from carnal frames and the indulgences of sin, as appears from the context. The reason he offers in the next clause is, *our salvation is nearer than when we believed*; which word *salvation*, contains an idea of the honours to be conferr'd on the true disciples of the Redeemer, at the day of his appearance, for this day seems plainly intended in the next verse, *the day is at hand*,

band, especially when we compare it with his discourse in the chapter immediately following; so that the nearness of that season, in which the glory of believers shall shine forth compleat, is an argument for modesty and patience, and this will be the case at the time referr'd to in our text, *viz.* the second appearance of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

C H A P. VI.

Containing the improvement of the subject, in several remarks.

WE have seen, in the foregoing chapter, what a well chosen argument this of the *Lord's being at hand*, is, to enforce the duty enjoined: he is the Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is no less than the eternal son of God, possess'd of the same perfections with his divine father; our Lord and sovereign, that expects and requires moderation, and has discovered so much disposition to, and delight in it, by his own temper and conduct towards his people, when in the world for their sakes; so that if dignity of nature, authority, or example, can have any influence on such who are accountable to him, the person coming demands our highest regard to what we are here exhorted to. This person is at the very door, just ready to make his appearance; at his coming, all present things we are now so prone to be im-

derately fond of, will vanish and perish for ever; for with him comes the end of all things, the heavens shall depart as a scroll, and the earth with all her works shall be burnt up; we must every one be brought into judgment, and account for every excess we are guilty of; persons and things shall be all unravell'd and clearly laid open; then the wicked, whether openly violent, or hypocritical, shall meet with their just deserts; divine vengeance will be executed upon them; and in a word, at that time all the glorious promises shall be fulfilled on the wise, such that are so, for a holy indifferency to this vain world, conquering their lusts, promoting the honour of Christ, and comfort of his people. All these things are certain on Christ's coming a second time, which time is at no great distance, if the scriptures are to be credited; for *the Lord is at hand*. Each of the above articles have a tendency to bring the world into contempt, moderate our carnal affections, and assuage and weaken those lusts that betray, even sometimes, good men into what is justly condemned as inordinate, severe, and unlawful. I shall now close with a short remark or two: And,

First, We see how useful and important the doctrine of Christ's appearance is; when rightly applied, under a divine blessing, it strikes at the root of every lust, both of the flesh and the mind; this is a holy, a heart searching doctrine, and
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where it prevails effectually, it purifies from covetousness, sensuality and pride, it promotes holiness and love : this grace to be revealed, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live righteously, soberly and godly in this present evil world ; it regulates our hearts and lives, is a sin-mortifying, and a grace-nourishing doctrine ; such a doctrine as this can never be the invention of corrupt and fallen creatures : neither men nor angels, enslaved to lust and pride, could be capable of forming such a notion ; the pains taken to stifle convictions of it, and the tremblings of a guilty conscience under the apprehensions of this season, are good evidences against its being the produce of degenerate wretches, who delight in sin. This therefore is a doctrine from God, it bears the proper characteristics of divine truth ; its nature and tendency being so well calculated for the propagation of light, purity and love ; these are all diametrically opposite to the affections of such who are apostates from their glorious creator, the fountain of every perfection. This great truth, where it takes place with power, influences our thoughts, words and actions, will affect our behaviour in the sight of God and men, and is a noble incentive to every thing that is praise-worthy in civil and religious life. He that is a friend to true holiness, and that hates every thing impious and vicious, cannot but admire and be zealous for it. It becomes

ministers therefore to be frequently opening, improving, publishing and setting home on the consciences of men this awful and solemn approach of the *great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*.

Secondly, This should direct us to be often searching the scriptures, and examining the evidence of Christ's second coming, together with the near approach, and awful consequences of it, that so the things of time and sense may not work too powerfully on our minds. The more clearly we discern, and the more sensibly our hearts are affected with this great event, the less force will creatures and corruptions have upon us, to the unfitting us for duty in life, resigning at death, and meeting this *Jesus* when he comes to judgment. This is a matter of pure revelation, and revelation abounds with declarations concerning it. *Enoch*, the seventh from *Adam*, prophesied, saying, *behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment, &c.* [*Jude* xiv.] and Christ himself, the faithful witness, thus closes, [*Revel.* xxii. 20.] saying, *surely I come quickly*. It should ever be on the hearts and before the eyes of such who profess the fear of God, that *the Lord is at hand; the coming of the Lord draweth nigh; the judge standeth before the door*. There is reason to conclude, that Satan would be often disappointed in his attacks upon us, if such who bear the name of Christians were to judge themselves more by this grand and awful truth

truth: If believers were always conscientiously to consider, whether, what they do or allow is what they could with courage and satisfaction be willing to meet their Redeemer in the exercise of, they would have more peace in their own souls, and be more extensively useful to one another: We should not have so many heats and divisions, griefs and offences, if this were more attended to; but, under the serious impression of this assurance, we should each separately, and in our collective state, as bodies in Christ, be rejoicing in this Lord, as becomes those whose names are written in the book of life,

To conclude; Let this be a warning to all licentious persons: how dangerous is the case of proud, obstinate, self-willed sinners, who run on in excess of riot, loosen the reins on the neck of their lusts, and are making provision for the flesh to fulfil all its intemperate and vicious inclinations: O! that such could see and consider they must shortly appear at the judgment seat of Christ! God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness; no one can frustrate this his council and determination, or evade the concern each individual has in this business; we must every one of us give an account of ourselves to God: and this time hastens on, he that comes with divine authority and power, to execute vengeance on ungodly sinners,
comes

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comes quickly. Now many are presumptuously flattering themselves that they may escape the judgment of God ; such shamefully abuse his patience and long-suffering ; because sentence is not speedily executed, their hearts are fully set in them to do wickedness ; but, *the Lord is at hand*, and dreadful must be their case, who are found in their sins at his coming : then they will be convinced too late, that *the wages of sin is death* ; when once the trumpet is blown, time is over, there can be no change or alteration, no more space for repentance : this is the language of him who is coming to judgment ; *he that is unjust, let him be unjust still, he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* [Revel. xxii. 11, 12.] Such will be the case of those who die impenitent, they shall be reserved to this day, which to them shall be a day of destruction from the almighty ; for besides death (whose stroke we are liable to every moment) deprives us of the means of grace and repentance : it is but a little time, and those who are thus overtaken in their rebellion, will find that he who has vengeance in his heart, will descend in flaming fire. In a word, the day of wrath is hastening on, when no sinner shall be able to stand ; *then will be the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds ; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek*
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for glory and honour, and immortality, eternal life; to these, glory, honour, and peace are promised: but hear the dreadful contrast, to them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, and there is no respect of persons. [Rom. ii. 5, to 11th inclusive.] Consider this all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

A HYMN.

A

H Y M N,

Alluding to the foregoing Discourse.

I.

*ATTEND, my Soul, the solemn news ;
Jehovah comes, your Lord and king ;
His righteousness will none excuse,
But every one to judgment bring.*

II.

*In him ador'd perfections spy,
Let sinners dread, let Saints rejoice ;
All nature must dissolve and die
At th' Archangels thund'ring voice.*

III.

*Around him, fire's devouring flames,
Shall melt the heavens, and earth shall burn ;
Consume the works that fill the same ;
The stateliest must to ashes turn.*

IV. His

IV.

*His members circle round his throne,
At his tremendous bar shall stand,
The world.—Each action shall be known,
And who have kept the Lord's command.*

V.

*Wrath to the wicked he'll repay,
But Saints shall jewels then appear,
Precious to Christ, and on that day
Their glorious crowns and robes shall wear.*

VI.

*Let worldly cares and joys be few,
And every rising lust suppress;
Your modesty to all men shew,
Who in this Jesus do profess.*

VII.

*May ev'ry word and act repeat
Your meekness, love, and heavenly mind;
His image whom you hope to meet,
And through whose blood salvation find.*

VIII. With

VIII.

*With courage then you'll rise and face
Th' approaching judge, your greatest friend;
And sing the lamb's victorious grace,
When earth and time shall have an end.*

The End of the second P A R T.

Constant prayer a remedy against sinful and distracting cares.

P A R T III.

B E I N G

A small tract on anxiety, and carking care about *present things*;

W H E R E I N

The nature, source, and pernicious consequences of such cares, are briefly touched on.

Together with

Various arguments to prove the unreasonableness and folly of indulging them, after having applied to God through *Jesus Christ*, according to his gracious direction and invitation.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths; Proverbs iii. 6.

Martha, Martha, *thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.* Luke x. 41, 42.



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P R E F A C E.

Reader,

EASE and happiness are professedly the pursuit of mankind; these in perfection are not to be expected in the present state, nor indeed is any degree of true ease and tranquility to be obtained in the way most persons are seeking after it: the generality of persons are eagerly grasping after the possession and enjoyment of the things of this life, in a very slight regard, if not a total neglect of their duty to God; but how absurd is this, when no creature-object can be obtained without the divine permission, or be of any profit (if acquired) without his blessing; and creatures at best are utterly insufficient to satisfy the desires of that immortal soul we all have, and must be accountable for.

We are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; nor will any affluence or situation whatever, secure our minds from care and sorrow; he that had the greatest opportunity

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for

for experience, after having set his heart diligently to find content, assures us all things possess'd and enjoy'd under the sun are vanity and vexation of spirit; where to find uninterrupted peace in this troublesome world, is a vain enquiry; where to rest our burthen, and compose our hearts on every revolving wave, is the wiser question: a gracious answer to this is given by our heavenly Father in his word, and particularly in that passage, considered in the following lines; if this explication and improvement of it, which I have attempted, should be the means of convincing any, how foolish and unbecoming it is to indulge anxieties under a profession of the fear of God, and of stirring up some who are perplex'd, to exercise themselves in the way of peace and comfort, I shall be sufficiently rewarded for the pains of transcribing what I had no intention to do, when I first studied and preached it: and I hope if any receive advantage from it, they will chearfully join with me in ascribing praise to God who has made such relief as is herein declared for our wounded, weary souls, during our passage through this dangerous and toilsome wilderness.

Something

P R E F A C E.

V.

Something correct and ingenious is usually expected when a person commits his thoughts to writing, and presents them to the view of others; but I aim not to satisfy the curiosity, but rather to comfort the souls of my fellow Christians: it is not for a specimen of my abilities, but of my desire to be instrumental in strengthening the hearts of others, and rendering them more able to exercise the graces and duties of the Christian life. If the former had been my design, I should have chose other subjects, and such discourses, in the composing of which, invention has been more employed and greater care taken of the style; plain experimental tracts, are what usually promote the power and life of Godliness most; the press produces few of this kind in the present age, in comparison to the number of polemical writings: disputes are daily published, and many are striving to excel in such pieces; but the want of directions concerning the use of those doctrines they contend for, is much lamented over by some: treatises demonstrating the necessity, and describing the manner of the influence of divine truths on the hearts and lives of such who have any saving knowledge of them, seem necessary to be repeated to every generation of professors.

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I have often wished some great talents in the church were not so wholly taken up as they seem to be with mere doctrinal points, handled only in an argumentative way; great care indeed there ought to be, to defend those glorious doctrines that are the foundation of our faith, hope, and joy; and loud has been the call of ministers to employ their pens against the adversaries of these truths, who have multiplied and grown upon us for several years; under these circumstances we may be thankful to God, that he has raised up and encouraged some good soldiers to give the enemy battle, and succeeded them therein, to the joy and confirmation of such who seriously believe the scriptures of divine authority. I hope, however, it will be esteemed no just cause of offence to say, I apprehend the attention of ministers may possibly be too much engaged in this work; while persons are fighting the adversaries with chosen arguments, they should not forget to feed the flock with that choice experience, which, though despised by carnal People, is very healthful and nourishing to the souls of God's children. We should so brighten the arrows of our artillery, that they may enlighten and rejoice the hearts of the weakest believers,
while

while they wound and weaken the strongest infidels.

Unless the temper and conduct of professors answer to the doctrines that are taught, the boldest and most skilful attacks in favour of truth will be ineffectual to explode error, and put the enemy to shame; considering the disorders that appear in the societies, families, and personal conversation of many who call themselves Saints, how little these distinguish themselves from others in their zeal for ordinances, and especially that sweet and profitable institution of prayer; in their love to one another, in the fruits of a holy, spiritual deportment; it seems, I say, upon these considerations, high time to be remonstrating against the vanity of the clearest notions, concerning the purest doctrines, without an experimental acquaintance with their sanctifying influence: by this means, under a divine blessing, we may prevent heady persons from flattering themselves with acquirements in speculative knowledge; while we awaken the sleepy hearts of such that have received the grace of God to bestir themselves, so as to shew out of a good conversation, the power of Gospel truth, and thereby put to silence the ignorance of foolish

men: to be useful to this great and necessary purpose is my earnest desire, and in this view, I submit these and some other my thoughts of the like kind, to the consideration of such who name the name of Christ; believing they will find a testimony in the conscience of the experimental believer. I commend the whole to him that can render the least means subservient to his glory, and the edification of those that fear him, and remain a servant of souls, for Christ's sake.

PART III.

Constant prayer a remedy against sinful and distracting cares.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 6.

Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

CHAP. I.

Containing an explanation of the Text, with three general observations from it.

THE Apostle having animated these Christians to whom he wrote, to spiritual joy at all times, and christian moderation towards all sorts of persons, proceeds in these words to exhort them, pointing out the way in which they might expect to be capable of exercising themselves after this manner ; two things he directs to ; (1) To lay aside anxious cares ; (2) To be constant at the throne of grace, or to make known their requests to God. The former prevents, the latter promotes a disposition necessary to joy and moderation ; or it may be

the principal design of the Apostle is to shew, that the casting away the care he intends, (which we shall hereafter explain) is absolutely necessary to that patience, meekness, and good disposition, whereby spiritual joy is facilitated, according to the two foregoing verses; and that constant prayer is the only effectual means to attain this freedom from care: that these are both very great truths, will scarce be denied; and will naturally open to our view, in the prosecution of this subject. The first general branch of this exhortation is as follows; *Be careful for nothing.* We must be careful to understand the mind and will of God in his word, and take heed our vain ignorant hearts don't abuse such an exhortation: and if this be a truth, (which I think none will disallow) then it is plain, we are not to understand it as though there is nothing a believer is in any real true sense to concern himself about: It is absurd and perverse to argue from hence to a slothful, negligent unconcernedness about temporal or spiritual things: professors are to be careful as men, careful and industrious in their several callings, that they may *provide things honest in the sight of all men*, and have wherewith to *give to him that needeth*. [Rom. xii. 17. Ephes. iv. 28.] Not to be careful in a state of so much danger and necessity, as to outward things, would be unnatural and sinful; a godly moderation does not call for an ungodly indolence. Idleness,

as it is one of the basest and meanest of vices, tending to every thing that is wicked, so it is abundantly testified against in scripture; for any one to slacken his diligence in the station providence has placed him, so as to be indifferent about a suitable provision for his family, discovers great ignorance, or shews a very depraved mind indeed; for this is to omit what is praise worthy, which is what the Apostle so earnestly presses on them, verse 8. of this chapter. It is contrary to sound doctrine, insomuch that the Apostle says, [1 Tim. v. 8.] *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*; in which passage, I think, it is evident from the context, that he is opposing an idle, careless, gossiping about, under a profession, pretending to be indifferent about the things of this life; this evil, not a few in every age have been found in the practice of; but no person can be idle and innocent, the doctrine of the Gospel don't enervate the sinews of morality, or give the least encouragement to an indolent, careless disposition.

Much less are we to understand this advice, as countenancing an indifferency with respect to spiritual good; we are not to be careless about the honour of God, the welfare of our souls, or the edification of others; neither of these can be preserved or promoted without care and diligence,

gence. Vigilance must be added to sobriety or moderation ; and casting our care on the Lord consists with, yea encourages the soul to the discharge of duty. See *1 Peter* v. 7, 8. without care we are ruined, we shall give place to the Devil, and become a prey to his temptations, for he goes round about and spies where he may overtake at unawares, therefore we must watch and be circumspect. The Christian awakened by the spirit of God to see his danger, and quickened to a thirst after spiritual things, is a careful person : true repentance works in the soul a carefulness against sin and Satan, and about holiness and happiness ; [*2 Cor.* vii. 11.] *behold what carefulness it wrought in you* ; and this care is found and felt in proportion to the exercise of grace : great care is necessary about many things in the christian life. Such who bear the character of believers, are, or ought to be, pondering, thinking, and devising how they may bring glory to God, and are therefore charged to be *careful to maintain good works* ; [*Titus* iii. 8.] which, by the way, includes carefulness in our civil callings as the means, as in the forementioned passage ; *labour to give to him that needeth* : industry and frugality, are both necessary to liberality, and that beneficence, which, when performed in a right spirit, is for the honour of our heavenly Father ; [*Matt.* v. 16.] but neither of these can be maintained without care.

There

There is a carefulness incumbent on all Christians in a relative capacity, as members of a visible church. Ministers are to be careful of their people. A Christian called to that office, ought, and will, if he has the bowels of a minister, *naturally care* for their estate; as *Timothy* did for the *Philippians*, according to the 2d chapter and 20th verse of this Epistle: many things such an one finds care about, which, if he had no concern for, would subject him to a suspicion of being a mercenary; of having some bye and sinister ends in view; an hireling *careth not for the sheep*, says our Lord. [*John* x. 13.] People are to be careful for their minister, to provide for him according to his necessity, and their ability; which provision was not always used by the Apostle, but declined on particular occasions, for ends of edification; from which some ignorant, conceited persons, have taken the liberty of decrying all such care of the people for their minister; but it is far from being discouraged; it is represented as a sign of spiritual vigour, when people are forward to this duty. The Apostle rejoices in an instance which these *Philippians* gave of this care, and mentions it as a proof of their flourishing, verse 10 of the chapter wherein is our text. And God has called us to exercise care one over another under a profession, he has so constituted the body his church in general, and every particular church, *that the members should have the same*

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same care one for another ; [1 Cor. xii. 23.] every
private person in a community of Saints, ought
to care for his fellow members, that they per-
severe, may be comfortable and useful in the
house of God ; and use his utmost diligence for
these valuable and important ends.

The carefulness therefore dehorted from by
the Apostle here, is of quite another sort, does
not at all militate against the care incumbent on
a Christian in civil or religious life : it has refe-
rence to an immoderate degree of concern and
thoughtfulness about present things, an anxious
solicitude, which is a painful exercise of the mind,
cutting and dividing the heart as it were ; an
intense carking under any distress, or the desires
of what we apprehend valuable, as if happiness
or misery depended on outward things, and tem-
poral enjoyments : this care is very pernicious,
exposes the soul to much trouble, and endangers
its peace and welfare ; hence, 'tis promised in the
next verse they shall have peace to keep their hearts
and minds, &c. This carking solicitude we are bid
to avoid, when we are ordered to be careful for
nothing. But alas ! how shall we obey this
command, considering our weakness, and the
many changes and trials we pass through ? it is
very difficult. The method for attaining this,
under a divine blessing, is clearly described in the
next clause ; which brings me,

Secondly,

Secondly, To the other branch of the exhortation. In this, we are directed to make known our requests unto God : this is the way to get rid of our cares ; these anxious cares so incident to us in this state of imperfection ; cares so hurtful, that they expose us to disappointments, and fill our hearts with sorrow and vexation. In this direction, three things are to be considered, (1) What we are to do ? (2) How this is to be performed ? (3) The extent of the duty.

First, What are we to do in order to *be careful for nothing* ? we are to *let our requests be made known unto God*. We are therefore to go to God, you see, when we feel our hearts disposed to anxieties : some poor unhappy wretches involved in care and anxiety, consult the devil, or listen to the vain, corrupt imaginations of their own hearts, this hurries them on to some indirect methods to extricate themselves ; they violate their consciences in denying their profession ; stealing from their neighbour, or, it may be, lay violent hands on themselves, and thereby change the sorrows of this life, for the more dreadful sorrows of that state, where nothing but wrath and vengeance is found and felt, even where the worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched : this is owing to a neglect of God, a want of calling upon him, who has graciously said, *call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, &c.* [Psalms l. 15.] The Apostle directs, and every man's

man's reason would shew him, if he was not blinded by Satan, that God is the *only* proper object of our application; *for should not a people seek unto their God?* [Isaiah viii. 19.] the Prophet appeals to their consciences, *q. d.* can it be denied that a people should seek to their God? does not the light of nature shew it? surely it does; thus the infatuation and unreasonableness of that degenerate people is pointed out, many of whom had forsaken the Lord, and turned to idols. Well, to God we are to go with our requests, *i. e.* the secret wants and desires of our hearts, of which there are many under every circumstance and condition, through the reflection of our busy minds, by which these hearts of ours are exercised with hopes and fears. What we long after, is called a request, before it is formed into a prayer, [Job vi. 8.] *O, that I might have my request! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for!* Thus [Esther v. 6.] the king says to her, *what is thy request,* before she opened her mouth. These requests of every kind, how numerous soever, we are to lay before God, who is the only resource in a time of trouble: they are all to be made known, not for information, but obedience sake. This notification must be so understood, as to consist with the divine perfections; we are not to suppose God ignorant of these requests; he that created and sustains our natures, cannot be ignorant

norant of the most secret operation of that nature he has produced and upholds; he is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; he searches the reins of the children of men; he *compasses our path, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways*; the ways of our spirit within us, for he *understands our thoughts afar off; there is not a word in our tongue, but he knows it altogether*; i. e. from beginning to end, from the first motion in the soul, by which it was produced, through all its *revolvings* in the mind, till establiſh'd in the judgment and understanding, fastened upon by the affections, and it becomes as it were a principle in the soul; a request is usually formed of many of these thoughts, each of which God knows altogether, therefore he perfectly understands the resolution and desire of the soul, in its rise and progress, before it comes on the tongue. We do not make known our requests to God for the same reason we do to our fellow creatures, on whom we depend, or have an expectation from as instruments, which is, that they may understand and be acquainted with our case. This by the way may comfort the poor Christian that is ready to be discouraged because his prayers are weak, his talents are mean, that he cannot fitly or fully express his wants before God; let such an one remember, his God knows all his desire, and sees the secret workings of his heart: there is no danger of
missing

missing a blessing, through weakness of that prayer which goes out of unfeigned lips ; for besides that, our prayers are not the meritorious cause of the blessings we receive ; the object of prayer being an heart searching God, cannot mistake our necessity for want of a skilful representation of our case to him. However he has made it our duty, and 'tis an unspeakable privilege under all our necessities, we have liberty to publish, make known, or lay before him ourstate and case.

Secondly, How this business of making known our requests to God is to be performed, *viz. by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. i. e.* by addressing his footstool, the essential parts of which are here mentioned ; for though prayer and supplication are sometimes indifferently used, they are distinguishable, and, I think, are distinguished in our text ; prayer or sollicitation is that part of our address, in which we express our desires, and entreat the good things our souls long after ; supplication or deprecation expresses our aversion or fear of evil ; thus 116 *Psalms*, David says, he *loved the Lord because he had heard the voice of his supplication ; i. e.* to be saved from that approaching misery, which he apprehended himself ready to be overwhelmed with. *O Lord, I beseech thee deliver my soul*, was his cry, verse 4. [*Psalms* li. 11.] *Cast me not away from thy presence*. Again, thanksgiving, acknowledgments of the divine mercy, is another branch of address to God,

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the forgetfulness of which in a living man, a sinner out of hell, argues great folly and ingratitude: these are the constituent parts of our addresses; we never come to the throne of grace, but we have some good things to desire, some evil to fear, and in the midst of all our misery and necessity in the present state, there must be great ignorance or inattention not to see room for thanksgiving, indeed no prayer is acceptable without it. This is the way in which we are to make known our requests to God, with humility and praise; a proud and unthankful heart God will not hear; but him that is ready to own the divine goodness in what he enjoys, and comes with a broken, humble spirit, he will not despise.

Lastly, We have the extent of this duty, it is universal, *in every thing*. There is not any one thing or object we converse with, but may ensnare us; this anxious solicitude overtakes people in all conditions and circumstances; not only the poor, and such who have only from hand to mouth, but the rich also; and those that are in abundance, are liable to a multitude of these sinful distracting cares; nor is it only such who have large substance, that are involved in anxiety about the preservation and increase of it, but the heart may be entangled with trifles, as well as with more important concerns; this advice reaches to every thing: if we are to be careful for no-
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thing, and notifying our requests to God is a means, or the way in which we are to rid ourselves of these cares ; it follows, we must pray in *every* thing ; otherwise the remedy would not be answerable to the disease. *Paul* was a skilful physician, who, in order to cure a spirit distemper'd with anxious cares about *any thing*, prescribes our making known our requests in *every thing*. Thus we have explained the passage, and, taking it in connexion with the foregoing verses, it appears that he that would let his grace shine before men, and enjoy the delights of a Christian life, must lay aside his anxious cares about present things ; and amidst all his wants and desires, under every circumstance, go to God, address his throne, and notify and spread his requests before him.

How wonderful is the grace and wisdom of God, in all his appointments, for the comfort and salvation of them that trust in him ? He does not call his people under their distresses to hard services, or direct them to what is out of their power : had he commanded us to set about any thing in our own strength, and left us to have encountered with these thorns, our cares and fears, the end would have been sorrowful ; as we have no sufficiency of ourselves, so the least affliction would overwhelm us, the least temptation would overcome us ; but instead of exposing us in this manner, our heavenly Father invites us to himself, to make known our wants to him,

him, to leave our concerns with him: for in this notification of our requests to God, if it is performed in a right manner, there is a committing our cause to him, as him that will undertake for us, plead, manage, and bring every thing to a happy issue. What tenderness, love, and compassion are here? Well may it be said of our God, his commands are not grievous; can any thing be more delightful than for a child to tell over its wants to an affectionate, able parent? The very rehearsing our trouble relieves the burthened mind, even where no immediate or sufficient assistance is expected; much more must it yield satisfaction and pleasure to spread our wants before him, who has invited us with an assurance of succour and deliverance, and who is equal to all our necessities: I think we can never enough admire the condescension and kindness of being admitted to this liberty, in so free and unexceptionable a manner; that God should have opened a way of access, and thus wait to be gracious *in every thing* is wonderful. Believer there is not a moment or circumstance of your life; but his language is, come to me with all your burthens, distresses, and sorrows; in *every thing*, whether oppressed with sin or sorrow; whether your affliction be of the inward or outward man; whether you have trials of soul, body, or estate; how deep or difficult, how hard or intricate soever your case be; though fresh wants arise and

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multiply daily, continue to notify your requests; your God is not weak or weary, he is the same, and his word is eternal. In this sweet portion of his sacred revelation, he calls upon, warrants, and invites your soul and mine, in *very thing by prayer and supplication* to make known our *requests with thanksgiving*.

In order to our further improvement from this apostolick direction, I would lay down the following observations.

First, That men are naturally prone to be anxious about *something* that attends them in the present life.

Secondly, An anxious solicitude about *present things*, is very hurtful and pernicious to the soul.

Thirdly, That a believer may, and ought to be easy and resigned, under every circumstance, after having opened and committed his cause to the Lord in prayer.

But the discussion of these points, will be the subject of some following chapters.

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

Contains two general parts. First, when our cares may be said to be sinful. Secondly, whence such cares arise or flow.

WE now go upon the first doctrinal observation raised from the text in the close of the preceeding chapter, *which is this* ; viz. That men are naturally prone to be anxious about *something* that attends them in the present life : this life is a life of sorrow, in consequence of sin ; in a spiritual sense, the earth or the world, and the affairs of it, yield thorns and briars : fears and anxieties incumber and distress our minds. A very great propensity to cares, is suggested in the Apostle's directing us to be careful for nothing ; and indeed it is so universally the case, that it would be needless to go about to prove it. All are not alike perplexed, there is a wide difference in the disposition of men's minds, and in the trials and outward circumstances of particular persons : some are weaker, more ignorant, less able to bear with patience, and endure disappointment or threatening circumstances than others ; and God measures out different degrees of affliction, according to his sovereign and righteous pleasure : but though there is a difference in some natural tempers and dispositions, and a much

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greater through the interposition of the grace of God, and all persons, either in a state of nature or grace, are not alike sifted in a providential way yet there is a proneness in every one to be thus anxiously careful. and those who are truly regenerated, are frequently overtaken with too great thoughtfulness about *something*. The world will subtilly make its way through some object, under every circumstance, to inject a secret uneasiness, and betray us into an undue concern respecting temporal things, if we are not greatly on our watch : upon reflection, I believe every experimental Christian will allow it. Suppose, Reader, you are, through the grace of God, in a comfortable measure altered, easy, and free from carking cares in comparison to the state of your mind when altogether worldly and carnal ; or suppose you can acquit yourself from being perplex'd about some particular things, your neighbour is immoderately careful of ; sure, on examination, you will find there is something your heart is easily entangled with, and concerning which, you are prone to have cares and fears beyond what the nature of the case requires. This thing, the Apostle, or rather the spirit of God, who is the author of the word, and who searcheth the heart, aims at and points to, when he commands that we should be careful for nothing.

Under this head two things are proposed. *First*, To enquire when our concern is of that nature

ture which the Apostle opposeth, or when our cares may be stiled sinful. *Secondly*, To shew whence such anxious, sinful cares arise. *First*, When may we be said to fall into this care?

First, It is so when our care and concern about any thing in this life is after it, as a thing absolutely necessary for us. In such an intemperance of mind was *Rachel*, when she said to *Jacob*, *give me children, or else I die*; [*Genesis xxx. 1.*] herein she was guilty; but such is too often the language of our minds in a caring frame, with respect to the object we are in pursuit of, we cannot be satisfied without it, and it is as though our happiness consisted in it: our Lord told *Martha*, when she was incumbred about many things, and much serving, one thing was needful; there is no one thing in this life, that may properly be stiled a thing of this life, necessary, *absolutely so*, to our present comfort, or future happiness: men are miserable and happy under all sorts of outward conditions and circumstances. The favour of God, solid peace and joy, are not confined to any natural or providential talents. Therefore, though we may lawfully pursue, yea, covet earnestly the best gifts, we must not covet after, or care for them as necessary; this would be an undue, immoderate, and sinful care; a soul betrayed into such a care, cannot pursue it with a submission to the will of God, which is very sinful; all care about temporal things

ought to be attended with a willingness to yield to the divine pleasure, whether we enjoy it or no ; a care that exceeds this, is to be deprecated and condemned as foolish and fruitless ; it is beyond bounds, exposes the soul to many evils : it betrays us into impatience on the delay of what we seek after, and a secret repining at disappointments. We are very near, if not quite in such a frame of spirit, when we are not satisfied with having done our duty, having joined to our endeavours, prayer and supplication, and thereby made known our requests to God ; an uneasiness, after having so done, distressing our minds about having, or not having what we desire, or concerning our situation in this life, is but a bad sign, it looks as though we made it necessary, and is an argument of an anxious and sinful care. Our care for any thing in life, is not to be exercised about it as absolutely necessary, for nothing temporal or transitory is absolutely so ; in this respect we are to *be careful for nothing*.

Secondly, We are guilty of this evil, when our care about any particular thing so exercises our hearts, as to prevent our being thankful for, and enjoying what we are in possession of. Unthankfulness is another symptom of this care ; this follows upon God's withholding what we foolishly apprehend necessary for us ; something like this appear'd in *Abraham*, recorded *Genesis xv.* beginning.

beginning. The Lord appear'd to him and said, *fear not Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*; most comfortable assurance! what was his answer? instead of being filled with joy and thankfulness, as one might have reasonably expected, he peevishly replies, *what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house, is this Eliezer of Damascus*. He seems to apprehend a child was absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of God's promise, and so it was indeed; God had absolutely promised him a seed, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed: but he was in anxiety about having it before now, as if, because God seemed to delay; it was too late, and he could not possibly receive the favour, this made him impatient, he could not be thankful for what he enjoyed, nor for this kind and gracious visit; our text seems to hint this, in directing us to mingle our addresses with thanksgiving: men may cry in distress, they may plead for what they want, and deprecate the evil they fear; but if the heart is caring for any temporal enjoyment, as absolutely necessary, and impatient of its being bestowed, the person can seldom be thankful for benefits, or take any notice of the undeserving goodness of God to him. The addresses of such persons are usually destitute of praise.

Thirdly, When our care for any thing occasions a neglect of more important concerns, it is

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to be condemned : by our Lord's observation to *Martha's* being careful about many things, it seems she neglected at that time her improvement in better things : thus it is when our care about ease, liberty, and plenty, as to outward things, takes off our concern about spiritual blessings ; or when our care for enjoying much light, being favoured with large gifts, or usefulness in the exercise of the talents bestowed on us, exercises our minds, so as that we have but little care or concern about increasing in real love to God, and conformity to his image ; our weak minds are apt to be betrayed into a concern about lesser matters, while the enemy deludes us into an indifferency about things of great moment ; but every reasonable person may, on reflection, see the folly of such a care. Our Lord told his disciples to this purpose, *to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.* A thought or care that is sinful and forbidden, is the entertaining that degree of concern about any thing, which properly belongs to another object more valuable, important, and necessary ; this might be illustrated in a variety of instances ; take one for example : for a man to be more concerned about fine cloaths, and sumptuous or elegant food, than that which is convenient, fit and wholesome for the health and strength of the body, is great folly, *for life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment,* as our Lord argues. [*Luke xii.*

23.] Thus a care for the outward man, though necessary and becoming in its degree, if it be so pursued as to take off your thoughts from a concern about your spiritual welfare, and the happiness of your immortal soul, it is a sinful care, immoderate, and exceeds bounds; *for what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* [Matt. xvi. 26.]

Fourthly, When our care puts us upon any unlawful measures for obtaining our desires; we see persons sometimes go out of the way of their duty, and venture on something that their own consciences cannot justify, to procure, preserve, or maintain what they apprehend necessary: the care that puts us upon this is a sinful pernicious care; it is choosing sin rather than affliction; a wretched choice indeed! but too often made, under the influence of some deceitful lust: if we apply this to worldly things, all those instances in which persons employ the time that should be spent in the service of God, or take those measures for attaining or enjoying temporal things, inconsistent with the rules of piety, justice and honour, are to be accounted proofs of this unlawful care.

Thus our care is foolish and sinful, when it regards any thing in this life as absolutely necessary, when it so takes up our thoughts as to prevent our enjoyment of, or thankfulness for other things God is pleased to afford us; if it
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occasions our neglect of more important things, or the allowance of any thing condemned in the word of God, or by our own consciences, in pursuit after it. We proceed to the second thing proposed under this head, *viz.* To shew whence these sinful carking cares arise and flow.

First, From a passionate fondness for the creature ; worldly affections, beget worldly cares ; these anxieties are produced through carnality of mind, and a strong favour of the things of the flesh : what the mind is thus employed in caring about, the affections are strongly set upon ; the Apostle exhorts, [*Colos. iii. 1.*] *Seek those things which are above. i. e.* Let those things be your great care, study and pursuit ; think of, and follow after *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*. Well, how must this be done ? in order to it, he adds in the next verse, *set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth* : this proves that what our affections are set upon, we shall care for, and seek after ; when we are thus careful about our situation in the present state, it is a sign of inordinate affection to present things. It was *Peter's* strong natural affection for the life of his master that made him so anxious for its continuance, and gave him so much disgust to hear any thing of his being delivered into the hands of his enemies to be crucified : in this he mingled too much of carnal affection, as appears from our Lord's rebuke. [*Matt. xvi.*

23.] Few, if any, observing Christians can be entire strangers to this effect of over-fondness for a yoke-fellow, for children, or for delightful friends : in how many instances do they subject us to such cares our text speaks of? The like is applicable to substance, or any thing of this life we are eagerly pursuing after ; too much love for these things, fills us with this thoughtfulness, care and solicitude.

Secondly, Presumption is another cause ; upon examination, we shall find a secret and unwarrantable flattery lurks at the bottom of these cares.

(1) A presumption of long life, and much time to come ; we are caring for to lay up for many years, when perhaps this night our souls may be required of us : here is a boasting of to-morrow involved in this anxious concern about the present state ; which is in itself presumption, for we *know not what a day may bring forth.* [Prov. xxvii. 1.] (2) An apprehension we shall be able to obtain such things by our care and industry. Our diligence, with a patient reliance on divine providence, is our duty, and the way in which we are to expect God will bestow what is necessary for us ; but this excessive care savours of too great a dependance on ourselves, as though the race was for the swift, and the battle for the strong. It is plain God preserves a sovereignty in the dispensation of present things, and that our care in itself is nothing. When the disciples
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were in such a caring frame, our Lord informs them, they could not add any thing, no not *one cubit to their stature*; no more can we add any thing to the purpose and providence of God, which, if persons rightly considered, they would lay aside much of their solicitude. A caring spirit is attended with some degree of self-confidence; usually there is a secret, lurking, but deceitful apprehension of our own power, as if by our care, diligence and assiduity, we shall be able certainly to procure such and such things. (3) A presumption we shall find contentment and satisfaction in those circumstances we aim at; we are ready to say to ourselves, if I were but secure from such an evil, in possession of such a good, how easy, pleasant and happy should I be; but these are all foolish, presumptuous apprehensions, as daily experience shews; for the most part, he that is not contented in one situation, if left to the same spirit, will not be contented in another; it appears therefore, satisfaction is not connected with any circumstances: we should then rather beg of our heavenly Father grace to be content in every state. Thus presumption is frequently the occasion of these sinful cares. But to proceed,

Thirdly, Unbelief is another cause; there is a doubtful mind, mingled with all this anxious care: though a true believer may be ensnared into this carefulness, which shews the weakness
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of faith, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* [*Matt. xiv. 31.*] doubts may be found in that heart, where true faith is implanted, but they flow from a quite different principle, and argue the weakness of faith. Unbelief produces these cares; unbelief of the perfections of God. By this I do not mean infidelity with respect to the divine being, as a being of infinite perfections, but a want of considering or exercising faith in those perfections. Thus the church was in care as one forsaken, shut up. [*Isaiab xl. 28.*] *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, &c. Hast thou not known; hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding.* This care was in a great measure owing to the want of considering the divine perfections, and unbelief with respect to God's works: thus when *Abraham* was in such care about God's fulfilling his word, he was led forth to behold the stars. [*Genesis xv. 5.*] There is an unbelief with regard to providence; our Lord therefore directs his disciples to consider the feeding of the ravens, and cloathing of the lillies, to free them from anxiety about the necessities of life. [*Luke xii. 24.*] Unbelief, respecting the charge and care Christ has for us, therefore the Apostle *Peter* brings it in as an argument for casting all our care upon him, that *he careth for*

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for us. [1 *Epistle v. 7.*] Unbelief in the promises of
God, this is the case when we are anxious about
spirituals or temporals, since he has promised to
carry on the good work he has begun; never to leave or
for sake us, that no temptation shall befall us, but that
he will find a way for our escape, and we are assured
that all things shall work together for good, &c.
but of this I shall speak hereafter: there is cer-
tainly a want of reliance on, or a distrust of such
promises, when men are involved and perplex'd
in these cares and anxieties. Thus a strong af-
fection for present enjoyments, presumption
about futurity in this life, our own capacity; and
the advantage and satisfaction we shall have
from the creature, together with a disbelief of
God, his perfections, providence, promise and
covenant, produce and betray us into this anxi-
ous frame, and disposition of mind. This tem-
per, every one that knows his own interest, will
watch and pray against; for such cares have a
very unhappy influence to destroy the peace and
comfort of the mind; and by their means many
a precious soul has been lost. But of this in the
following chapter.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

Proving that an anxious solicitude about present things, is hurtful and pernicious to the peace and happiness of the soul.

WE are now come to the second doctrinal observation laid down in the first chapter, *viz.* that an anxious solicitude about present things, or temporal enjoyments, is very hurtful and pernicious to the soul. It was the spiritual welfare of these persons the Apostle had in view; he sought after the furtherance of their faith, peace and joy, that they might increase in every grace, and be ripened for an eternal state; nothing can be more evident, than that it was his desire that these *Philippians*, with himself, might attain unto perfection, and lay hold of the prize; in order to this, he bids them *be careful for nothing*: this plainly points out to us, that the carefulness, anxiety and solicitude he has reference to, has a tendency to prevent our spiritual growth, and hinder our progress in the ways of God, with that cheerfulness and moderation recommended in the preceding verses. Such cares are very hurtful, if we consider,

First, They evidently tend to hinder and take us off from an application to the means of grace. This care indulged calls for all our time, and

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in too many instances prevents our waiting on God in publick or private: it stands opposed to that moderation, which, as has been observed, discovers itself in determining that our pursuit after the world, shall leave room for the closet and the sanctuary. The effect of this care, where it is predominant, is the neglect of both: our text shews that one of the best remedies against this care, is committing our case to the Lord by prayer; prayer is an enemy to these cares, and this carefulness is an enemy to prayer; it has a direct tendency to, and often proves the unhappy cause of preventing persons from engaging in this duty. The like opposition this makes to reading, hearing, and other appointments for the nourishment of our souls. Persons overtaken with such a spirit cannot find time for searching the scriptures, or waiting at *Zion's* Gates, the provisions of infinite wisdom are slighted; invite such to their duty, and they are for excusing themselves, as our Saviour represents; [*Luke* xiv. 17. &c.] one has entered into a new relation, another has purchased an estate, a third has a trial to make of something he has procured for his service. There is no end of the excuses these distrustful cares and anxieties put us upon for the neglect of our duty. A customer may come, says the tradesman; my house may be robbed, says another, if I leave it to attend divine worship; or some worldly advantage may possibly be
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lost, while I am sitting to hear God's word. While *Martha* was incumbred about much serving, she could not find time to attend the instruction of our blessed Lord. Seeking the world, and seeking the kingdom of heaven, are incompatible; they militate against each other; what naturally tends to take persons off from what God has appointed for their spiritual good, must be very pernicious to the Soul; for all grace is obtained and increased in the way of God's appointment.

Secondly, They hurry, discompose and prevent the profit of means when attended upon; this care confuses, and by it the heart is unfitted for improvement: though a person attends the richest means, if the mind is not at liberty to reflect, apply, judge and exercise itself on the word, he loses the benefit of it. The blessing of God, and his assistance, are indeed necessary, and without which we cannot think a good thought; yet we are actually concerned in thinking, embracing, retaining, and meditating on his testimonies; otherwise they convey no nourishment to our souls. These cares hinder our profit both *in* hearing, and *after* hearing. First, while we are hearing, through this anxiety we are filled with thoughts about the world: to all outward appearance we may be attending on the word, when our minds are, thro' the influence of such cares, quite intent on other things; all the powers may

be employed in contriving and devising about things wide of our spiritual concerns. Such a caring spirit was discovered by him that attended our Lord's ministry, mentioned *Luke xii. 13.* in the request he makes after Christ had been preaching; *master, saith he, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.* This man had, with the rest of the auditory, stood and seemed to attend our Lord's sermon, related at large from the beginning of the chapter, to that verse; but there appears no connexion between the man's thoughts, and the subject of Christ's discourse; his heart was so intent on his portion of worldly goods, which he apprehended his brother unjustly withheld from him, that what our Lord preach'd, made no serious impresson on his mind. It may not be unprofitable a little to reflect on this instance, something like which is too frequently to be found with such who sit under the preaching of the Gospel. Our Lord had been warning against hypocrisy, and shewing, that there is a time when all such shall be detected and punished, he had intimated the destruction of the wicked under the wrath of God in hell; yet you see it did not awaken him to any concern about his being sincere in his attendance, or rouse his conscience with any fear, lest that punishment should fall on him for continuing in unbelief, and not improving the means he now enjoyed :

enjoyed ; here was no concern about his soul, but the man remained stupid and sensual.

Again, Christ discoursed on providence, the concern God has with the minutest affairs, such as the falling of a sparrow, or numbering the hairs of our head ; but this does not remove his anxiety or eagerness after the world. Our Lord had also been shewing the necessity of being one of his disciples, in order to enjoy the honour of being owned, or avoid the shame of being rejected in the day of judgment, together with the fatal consequence of sinning against the holy Ghost. But how little effect had all this upon him, if we may judge by the request mentioned ? he was musing all this time on other things ; his caring for present enjoyments, prevented the powerful impression of these awful truths ; if any convictions arose, they were immediately stifled : what seemed to remain when the discourse was ended, was a conviction of the greatness, excellency, power, and authority of him that spake, which rather aggravated his slight of the doctrine taught by him. This was owing to his care about worldly things ; hence the use he would make of Christ's power or eloquence, was not to divide betwixt him and his sins, or between his guilty soul and the justice of God ; nor was it to invest him with a portion among believers, and insure him of an inheritance among the Saints in light ; but to put him into the possession of,

and oblige his brother to deliver him up something of this world: thus carnally minded persons would be for engaging the talents and influence of a Gospel minister in their worldly interest, while they pay no regard to that report which concerns their spiritual condition, and state Godwards. A due care about our worldly affairs is highly becoming at proper times, and by lawful methods; yet you see an over anxiety is hurtful, as it prevents the influence of the greatest truths, under the ablest ministry; our hearts cannot receive the truth, the mind is overcharged; while the ground is covered with thorns, the seed scatters aside, and turns to no profit. How often do professors of the Gospel find it thus; an anxiety about the issue of some bargain depending, the circumstances and situation of their worldly affairs take up their thoughts while hearing; in so much that they retain no sense of the most judicious sermons, on subjects the most sweet and engaging, or the most awful and tremendous. Instead of trying and judging their souls by the word, or praying for a blessing upon it, that so they may become conformable to the mind and will of God, and determine to follow the light of his testimonies; they are secretly casting about in their minds, how this or that scheme will do, for obtaining such or such a temporal advantage: upon breaking up of the assembly, such can better tell what they are now resolved to do about
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a stock of goods to be disposed of, or an estate in which they think they have a right, than they can of the sermon they have heard, or any resolution they have taken under it for the glory of God, and their spiritual welfare; for indeed their hearts have been employed about quite different things. So shamefully do we sometimes spend our time, when we are professedly in the immediate presence of the heart-searching God, and pretend to be hearkening to his word. Few, if any, can acquit themselves from some degree of this folly at one time or another; this is owing to a carefulness after temporal things, and the occasion of many perishing under the means of grace.

Add to this, it prevents reflection and meditation after hearing, and thereby hinders the profit of the means attended upon; and such instances are more frequent than the former: persons are in a very bad frame indeed, if not in a bad state, who allow of meditation on carnal things while under the word, though the best find many excursions of mind: but many hear the word with some care, yet loose spiritual nourishment thereby, from an indulgence of these anxieties, immediately after having attended the means: they hear the word with some attention, and receive some conviction, they find some affections raised towards it, and form some resolutions; but hurrying into the business and concerns of this

life, they presently fall into this anxiety, their convictions are stifled, their love is quenched, and their resolutions broken; so that the word preached does not profit them. Thus worldly cares hinder our profit both under, and after the use of means; they distract our minds, as the Apostle shews, [1 Cor. vii. 32, 35 verses.] and as our Lord has set forth in the parable of the sower, [Matt. xiii. 22.] *the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choak the word, and he becometh unfruitful.* This article is more particularly enlarged upon, because it affects us so universally, and respects an evil we are so very incident to. We proceed,

Thirdly, These worldly cares are very pernicious to the soul, as they nourish and stir up the lusts of the flesh, which war against it; these cares produce a very bad frame of spirit; they stir up our passions against every person, and every thing we apprehend stands in the way of their interest; hence, covetousness, envy, wrath, are swelled and shew themselves: as nothing mortifies these lusts more than a reliance on God's providence and promise, and living with a holy indifferency to the creature, so nothing administers more to the increase and vigour of them, than a distrustful and anxious solicitude; for as this flows from unbelief, it is big with impatience, and makes a person fretful and passionate upon every delay, denial, or contradiction;

diction ; which is not only discovered against our fellow creatures, but sometimes against God himself ; and in this way it becomes exceeding pernicious : such cannot *be still and know that he is God*, but their minds are, through this carefulness under adverse providences, filled with murmurings, discontent and anger, even against the divine proceedings, and hard thoughts and unadvised speeches are often the consequence. In short, this carefulness prevents resignation under God's hand, without which our spirit cannot be benefited by his chastisements, which I think the Apostle *Peter* plainly hints at ; [1 Epistle v. 6, 7.] *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty band of God, that he may exalt you in due time ; casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you ;* from this passage I think it appears, that this care prevents the soul's humiliation before God, and deprives it of the spiritual advantage of providences as well as ordinances ; for under the influence of such cares, our hearts are apt to rebel rather than resign : these thorns prick the bladder of pride, let out the corruption of our minds, and give occasion to all the members of indwelling sin to work, which are continually warring against the soul, and consequently their natural tendency is to the damage of its comfort and happiness. Add to these,

Lastly, They produce much sorrow and vexation, and so banish serenity and joy from the mind ;

mind: the soul thrives under moderation, and in the exercise of joy; but where this carefulness prevails, the heart is a stranger to both; they are destroyed by this anxiety, as it fills the mind with anguish and distress: Godly sorrow enriches the heart, but natural and worldly sorrow impoverishes and makes it lean. These cares produce sorrow in stirring up amazing fears, and tormenting dreads, arising from the difficulty and uncertainty of attaining to what we are so anxious about; these distract and cut the heart, and give it inexpressible pain. They have this unhappy influence, as they put the person on various attempts, which on reflection wound the conscience; for, as beforemention'd, they frequently discover themselves by tempting to unlawful methods for gratifying the desires of the mind, but the pleasure of such indulgencies is very short, conviction soon follows; if persons are not given up to judicial hardness of heart; its effect on the soul may be compared to the Apostle's book he took out of the Angel's hand and eat, [*Revel. x. 9.*] sweet in the mouth as honey, but bitter in the belly, for it presently turns into sorrow. These cares are productive of vexation and trouble, as they interrupt in duty; the mind divided, hurried to and fro, and entangled with them, cannot meditate, pray, hear or reflect; such a frame is very distressing to a serious person; one that truly fears God cannot but
mourn

mourn under such circumstances. In short, this is their effect, as they are always fruitless in their operation, for disappointment naturally brings sorrow; so no person gets any thing by this caring. We cannot by our thought add any thing, exceed the least degree of God's purpose and providence, as we formerly hinted; on the contrary, they often hinder us from what might otherwise be obtained. Our very care, when it becomes inordinate after a worldly good, unfits us for the exercising ourselves in the way God has appointed for obtaining it, and by this means it hinders our attaining it. It is actually influential, and is chargeable with being the occasion of our missing what we are in the pursuit of: the word careful in our text, is observed by most criticks to carry in it the idea of cutting, dividing and distracting the mind; such a care as frets the spirit, and fills it with impatience, thereby torturing the heart: this points out what I assert, that it produces sorrow, and also how it does so; viz. by dividing and distracting the mind, whereby persons are disordered and cannot attend to any duty or ordinance, civil or religious, and therefore are fruitless; for God bestows his gifts for the most part in the use of appointed means. These cares are fitly compared to thorns indeed, for there is no goodness in them, nor will they yield us any valuable fruit: we feel pain from them when first they grow up, every motion of them in our hearts

hearts is painful, and the end is sorrowful and grievous. They pierce us through with many sorrows; no wonder, since they exercise those lusts which war in our members, that are sword-men, and have a sting; they leave the mind impress'd with guilt, and worn out with vexation and disappointment. Thus these cares have an unhappy influence to our spiritual damage. They hinder our attending upon, and improving under the means afforded for our growth in grace. They make way for the tyranny of lust, and produce nothing but sorrow and vexation: all this is exceeding pernicious to our souls, that are to be nourished by God's word, for unless we diligently attend to, and meditate upon this *sincere milk of the word*, we cannot grow thereby.

How should we lament over our apostacy from God, and that vanity and weakness which are the consequences of it? It is owing to this, we are exposed to these painful and hurtful Inmates; they are the fruits of the fall, the product of those inordinate affections. How should we bemoan the presumption and unbelief our minds are debased with, as the descendants of a corrupt degenerate head? every time we feel these piercing briars enter our tender hearts, it should give us a quick remembrance of our revolt from God, and fill us with humiliation and sorrow before him, on account of sin, the cause of these calamities.

Chap. I.
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III. Chap. IV. *sinful and distracting cares.* 221
and calamities. The wounds such cares give, would
any be mortal, and our poor souls bleed to death,
of if the grace of God prevented not; but, blessed
be his name, he has not left us without a re-
s- medy; grace and peace are freely given forth
d from God the Father, and our Lord *Jesus Christ*,
r- who has made peace by the blood of his cross;
s sin is condemned, and the believer, applying to
l the throne of grace, which he is now at full li-
berty to do, shall obtain strength to mortify his
corruptions, and relief from these cares. Prayer
is the means of being freed from such anxieties;
of which in the following chapter.

C H A P. IV.

*Shewing why a believer may be easy and re-
signed under every circumstance in life,
after having opened his case to the Lord in
prayer.*

THE last general observation we made
from the words which are the foundation
of this treatise is this, *viz.* That a believer may
and ought to be easy and resigned under every
circumstance, after having opened his case to
the Lord in prayer. This notification is the re-
medy prescribed; the Apostle's manner of speak-
ing gives us to understand, that when we have
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in any circumstances notified our requests to God, we have no need, nor ought we to indulge this carefulness. There are various reasons to be offered why a Christian may, and ought to be perfectly easy with respect to the final event and issue of every thing, and lay aside that distressing anxiety of mind so hurtful to his peace. In general, such may be assured he will protect, defend, nourish them, and supply all their need: *fret not thyself, commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* [Psalm xxxvii. 1. 5.] *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* [Prov. iii. 6.] *The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; he is their strength in the time of trouble.* [39th verse of the forementioned Psalm.] but it would be endless to repeat all that God has revealed to this purpose, my intention being to present the Christian his privilege and duty in a concise manner. It would frustrate my design to recite the greatest part of the bible which tends to shew and prove this matter. I propose some particular arguments which may serve as hints to lead the mind of the Christian reader into a serious contemplation of his liberty in Christ, that, so comparing what I say with the sacred standard, and searching the scriptures himself, he may be abundantly established in this point for his consolation and joy. In this chapter I confine myself to the encouragement believers have

to be thus satisfied and easy, when they have spread their wants before God in the manner the Apostle directs. Christians have great reason to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently, when they are in the utmost distress, and in the prospect of calamity, if we consider the following particulars :

First, The relation God has taken such into through his Son ; they are his children ; he is their father ; this is the endearing character, under which he has graciously represented himself to engage their affections and dependance ; his language is [2 Cor. vi. 18.] *And will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone,* says our Lord. [Luke xi. 11.] God has graciously revealed himself under characters that subsist among men ; that so our faith may be strengthened, and expectations raised by reflection on what may reasonably be looked for from one another in such relations : hence, Christ shews how unreasonable it was for his disciples to be solicitous about any thing necessary for them from this very consideration. If an earthly parent will not see his child perish, or withhold any thing from him, he apprehends for his good, but is always ready to supply him, being rejoiced to see him live and prosper ; how much more shall God, who having been pleased to style himself

self father, and is the God and father of such that believe in Christ, take care of his children that fear him? [*Luke xii.*] Our Saviour had been directing his disciples to lay aside this thoughtfulness, in a comfortable assurance every thing necessary should be added. He urges this as an argument, (referring to what they were anxious about.) *And your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things*; verse 30. It should be sufficient to satisfy a child, after having made known his wants to his parents, that his parents are acquainted with his case, and will take the fittest opportunity to relieve his wants. In like manner believers should be easy, and quietly hope under every dispensation, since God knows their case; both in consequence of his own infinite knowledge, and their supplications: God is their father. It is your father, believer, that has this acquaintance with your state and condition. This is a great argument for laying aside carking cares, if we consider in the next place,

Secondly, The properties of this our spiritual parent, arising from the perfections of his nature; God cannot condescend to take upon himself any character, or relation with his creatures, but he must fill up that character to the highest satisfaction, and unspeakable advantage of those who are so happy as to stand in such a relation to him: In him are all the excellencies of a parent to be found. *First*, He is full of love and compassion

passion towards his children : among the sons of men there may be found unnatural parents ; the relation may subsist, but the affection may be wanting ; but God has the bowels and heart of a parent ; *like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him* ; the words may be read, *like as the bowels of a father*, these you know, sensibly move towards a dearly beloved child when beheld in misery ; such is the disposition of God towards his people ; the relation itself is voluntary, not necessary ; (for we are speaking of God as a father in covenant through Christ) this relation is founded in love ; he don't so much love us because we are his children, as that we are his children because he loved us ; to this purpose the Apostle says [1 John iii. 1.] *Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God* ; it did not arise from the nature and fitness of things, that any of the race of apostate *Adam* were put into this relation ; but, the free love and favour of God ; they are predestinated to the adoption of children by *Jesus Christ*, according to the good pleasure of his will ; [Ephes. i. 5.] our being his children, and his being our father, in this sense therefore, is the fruit of his free and everlasting love, we are his adopted ones, consequently there is not the least reason to doubt of his love. If his love was the source of this relation and this affection, we are sure, from the perfections of his

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nature,

nature, that it is constant, unchangeable, and eternal there remains no rational ground of hesitation; surely then the believer may be satisfied with having committed his case to him; for what will a parent, whose heart is full of love to his child, suffer it to want.

Secondly, His infinite wisdom: we have already offered a hint as to his knowledge, his exact acquaintance with every punctilio of our necessity, as an encouragement to prayer, especially under a sense of the weakness of our petitions. Wisdom, (which takes in his judgment and discretion for the management of us and our affairs,) is, if duly weighed, a quieting consideration, after having notified our requests to him: now our heavenly Father, whose understanding, as well as wisdom is infinite; not only knows when we are in temptations, the number, nature, and particular circumstances of them, but how to succour, at what time, and by what means to deliver us. An earthly parent may fail for lack of wisdom, his child may suffer the loss of the intended good his affectionate heart designed him; but there is no danger of this to the Christian, with respect to his heavenly Father. We are prone to be impatient and uneasy, because relief does not come at such a time, or from such a quarter; and upon enquiry perhaps we shall find many of our perplexing cares arise from disappointments of this sort: in order to prevent
this

this source of evil, let us consider what I am now speaking of, the *wisdom* of our Father; his love is great, beyond all compare or expression, but it is not a foolish fondness; sometimes this is exercised by an earthly parent towards his children, indulging them in every thing they weakly imagine is for their good, though it be never so hurtful and pernicious; thus, while they are attempting to discover a more than ordinary respect to their off-spring, they become unhappily the occasion of their ruin. But the Lord of hosts, our heavenly father, is *wonderful in council*. [*Isaiab xxviii. 29.*] It ought to be for the satisfaction of those that trust in him, and commit their case to him, that *he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him*; [*Isaiab xxx. 18.*] and this is his character, you see, at the same time he is represented as *waiting that he may be gracious*: fear not, the bread of adversity, and water of affliction may be necessary, it may continue for a time; but he that established the world by his wisdom, governs all worldly things with respect to his people, so as to correspond with that covenant, which contains every thing in it necessary to their salvation, and in the settlement of which there was such a depth of wisdom and knowledge discovered. This leads to another comforting property, *viz.*

Thirdly, His power and capacity: an affectionate, wise parent, among men, may be indigent,

poor and weak ; it may not be in his power to hand forth what he sees his beloved child wants, and which he longs after for him ; indeed the richest earthly parents can do but little under many of the greatest wants their children are subject to ; for instance, in trouble of mind they know not how to relieve the distress'd conscience, or bind up the broken bones ; there are also many disorders the outward man is incident to, which no art, expence, or trouble can remove ; and in an hour of death, earthly parents can neither save their dearest children from the stroke, or succour them under it : but God is able to do above what we can ask or think ; in every circumstance he can support and deliver at his pleasure. This power, has therefore, a two fold influence to remove anxious fears, *first*, as it is exerted in supporting us under our trouble, and *secondly*, in relieving us from it. If our enemies, burthens, or afflictions continue, his grace communicated shall be sufficient, and when he sees fit to come forth for deliverance, no creature can resist ; for he *can do every thing*, as *Job* says [xlii. chap. 2 verse.] *no thought can be withholden from him* ; and as no subtilty can over-reach him, so no power can withstand him ; for he *has a mighty arm, strong is his hand, and high is his right hand*, [*Psalms* lxxxix. 13.] In the declaration or manifesto (if I may so call it) of his relation to his people, as their father, in the forementioned passage ;

passage [2 Cor. vi. 18.] you may observe it is finished off thus, saith *the Lord Almighty*, directing, as it were, the eye of faith to the divine omnipotence engaged in his behalf through that relation. What have the children of such a parent to fear? When things look dark and gloomy, outward circumstances threaten; Satan will indeed try, and may too often succeed in turning us aside from the consideration of this perfection of our heavenly father; knowing, if once faith fixes on that, it will be no easy matter for him to distress the mind with perplexing cares; but a forgetfulness of this, through his temptations, and our proneness to unbelief, subjects us to these thorny companions; when we are thus overtaken, notwithstanding we may have spread our case, under any trial, before the Lord, we are not found trusting in him as the Lord, God omnipotent. In consequence of this, the carnal reasonings of our minds, upon the seeming insuperable difficulties that lie in the way, subject us more to unbelief, and our hearts are thereby filled with distracting, distressing cares. A specimen of this you have in *Abraham*. He seemed at first staggered at his age, his complaint [Genesis xv. 2.] is, I go childless, or, as it may be read, I am going childless, seems to point out he apprehended himself now drawing towards the decline of life,

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life, being (probably) * fourscore years old, or upwards; or it may be, more discouraged from *Sarah's* age, he thought he should go to the grave, childless; hence, he was ready to fear he never should receive the promises of a numerous seed: after this, when God had more particularly assured him, that one out of his own bowels should be his heir, verse 4. he fell into unbelief, to which the giving of *Hagar* and birth of *Ismael*, seems owing; the same spirit he was in upon its being revealed that *Sarah* should be the mother of the promised seed; [chap. xvii. 15.] to this seems owing his anxious desire after *Ismael's* life; ver. 18. with submission, I am inclined to think that the language of *Abraham's* heart, recorded verse before, was mingled with unbelief, notwithstanding the strong assurances given by God, and which he seems to receive with some degree of reverence by his *prostration*; our vain hearts move surprizingly from one frame to another, and the observing Christian knows, by sorrowful experience, how easily and quickly we are changed from the exercise of faith, to a fit of unbelief; and though *Abraham's* affection for *Ismael*, was, no doubt, strong enough to engage his most ardent supplications for his interest in the divine favour, yet, as I think, he appears incredulous with respect to

* See *Genesis*, chap. xvi. 16.

the child to be born, on account of his own and *Sarah's* age; there appears to me an anxiety about *Ismael's* life, through whom he desired God's promise might be fulfilled to him; and I apprehend God's repeating and explaining his determination on that head, seems clearly to shew *Abraham* had not only, if at all in view, *Ismael's* living in the divine favour: the thing he seemed earnest for was, that the covenant might be established with this son already born; and I cannot help thinking that to this petition, his slavish fears, through unbelief, prompted him: therefore God assures him, immediately, again and again, that his sovereign pleasure was, that another, even one born of *Sarah* herself, should be the promised seed. All this diffidence, and the tormenting fear and painful anxiety, in consequence thereof, was owing to his * not exercising faith in God's omnipotency, which is what we bring it for. When he was assisted with more grace, he regarded not the superannuated condition of himself or *Sarah*; and being strong in faith of God's power, gave glory to his name: his trust was also in this perfection, when he withheld not the promised seed, after he had obtained him; but was or-

* *Sarah's* unbelief was attended with the same forgetfulness. See chap. xviii. 13 and 14 verses; therefore the Angel's reply to her was, *is there any thing too hard for the Lord?*

dered to offer him as a sacrifice to the living God, he submitted; *accounting that God was able to raise him from the dead*, says the Apostle, *from whence also he received him in a figure.* [Heb. xi. 19.]

To the like cause the tormenting fear of the *Israelites* was owing; under their distress they were anxiously caring, and saying, *the Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment passed over from my God.* This was for want of exercising faith on the divine omnipotency, as appears from the answer; *hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?* [Isaiah xl. 27, 28.]

Thus the undoubted affection, infinite wisdom, and almighty power of God our Father, are cogent reasons for our resting ourselves upon him, when we have committed our case to him; and these carking cares will vanish in proportion to our exercise of faith on him, as having taken us into that relation, and his being possess'd of those perfections, which, in this relation, are the security of them that fear and trust him. We proceed,

To a third argument for being easy after having notified our requests in the manner directed; *viz.* The promises he has given, joined to his faithfulness and truth: these are sufficient to make us easy, if duly attended to; he has not indeed

indeed promised us, absolutely, ease and plenty, riches, and freedom from outward trouble; these things are not absolutely necessary, neither affliction nor prosperity are absolutely good or evil, with respect to their influence on our real welfare and eternal happiness; but our Father has promised every thing we can really want, and consequently every thing we can reasonably desire; his precious promises are so many, that we cannot pretend to rehearse them in any particular treatise on divine things; let every Christian search the scripture, which, under the exercise of faith in God's covenant through his son, will be found a volume of promises to his soul: * there are also some choice collections made, that may profitably be perused; I shall only mention a few, that I may not leave out so considerable an argument to the duty I am pressing; for instance then, *he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*; [Heb. xiii. 6.] His promise in the covenant is, *I will not turn away from them to do them good*; [Jerem. xxxii. 40.] He has promised nothing shall ruin us; See *Isaiah* xliii. and beginning. Though we pass through fire and water, we shall not be burnt, nor shall any floods of distress, however

* One excellent piece of this sort was gathered by Mr. Samuel Clark, with a recommendatory preface by Dr. Watts; a 2d Edition was printed for D. Farmer, at the King's-Arms, in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1738.

deep,

deep, noisy, or threatening, drown us; he has promised to strengthen us in the day of trial; *as thy days, so shall thy strength be.* [Deut. xxxiii. 25.] *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make way to escape;* [1 Cor. x. 13.] sure shod with these, as with iron and brass, (for they are durable and will abide for ever,) we need not fear, though the path allotted us be rugged and thorny: as our afflictions shall not overcome us, our mercies shall not be delayed, for he has left it upon record, [Isaiah xxx. 18.] *The Lord will wait that he may be gracious unto you;* a most tender assurance that our salvation shall not be delayed in a time of trouble; as our heavenly father will not add the least weight, so he will not suffer our trials to continue a moment longer than is absolutely necessary; he has, I think, in that sweet declaration, given us to understand, an affectionate parent cannot be more delighted to bestow good on his beloved child, than the Lord is ready, as it were, to lay hold of every opportunity for to do them good. We may say, when tempted to be uneasy, after committing our case to the Lord, I will not fear, God will help me, and that right early.

Moreover, under all darknes, and in the midst of seeming delays, we are assured, whatever outward dispensations are necessary, *all things*
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work together for good: our chastenings, though grievous for the present, shall yield peace, and be fruitful to our advantage, and even our afflictions, *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* [Rom. viii. 28. 2 Cor. iv. 17. and Heb. xii. 11. compared.] In a word, he has firmly promised that *they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.* [Psalm xxxiv. 10.] If these, and a multitude of such like promises, express'd or implied in sacred writ, are not sufficient to make us easy, after having made known our requests to God, as our Father in Christ, nothing will.

Fourthly, Another argument is to be taken from what this heavenly Father has already done; the Christian may assure himself from his preservation, effectual calling, and gift of his spirit, that he shall want for nothing necessary, he may and ought therefore to rest his concerns, with him, and be perfectly easy; especially if he reflects on the bestowment of his only begotten son, the fruit of his wonderful love; *for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son*; this unspeakable gift, if rightly considered, may be sufficient to silence all the cavils of unbelief. What though our heavenly Father sees meet to permit distress and trouble to continue upon us, can we believe he has given his dear Son for us, and then reasonably hesitate about his freely bestowing every thing needful? Outward dispensations may raise doubts through our carnality,

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carnality ; we may, with good old *Jacob*, think,
under cloudy and stripping providences, all
things make against us ; but it must be in a for-
getfulness of this surprising instance of his kind-
ness, who can doubt God's being for them,
that have any faith in this amazing donation for
their souls ? and if God be for us, who, or what
creature can be capable of our ruin ? Thus the
Apostle argues in *Romans* viii. The Covenant
he has made with us in Christ, and the Inheri-
tance he has provided for us, might be urged ; and
they are both strong proofs that he will withhold
no good from us. The former is, through infinite
wisdom, *ordered in all things and sure* ; the latter
included in it, must consequently be certain ;
the promise of eternal life must be, and is, un-
doubtedly, sure to all the seed ; such are all true
believers ; his covenant he will not break ; the
mercies of it are infallibly certain to those inte-
rested in it. It is beneath us, as rational creatures,
to suppose if he has laid up such a glory for us,
as is revealed in the promises, that he will suffer us
to perish in the way to it. But to enlarge here, as
far as the subject is capable, would be almost end-
less. I would only add, that the gift of the spirit,
whereby we are enabled to pray for blessings,
is a sure token ; you may see by the argument
of our Lord, that the gift of the spirit is a gift
equivalent to the furniture of every thing necessa-
ry ; who when speaking to his disciples to lay aside
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their cares, he sets the bounty of earthly parents to their children, in the light of a parallel with his heavenly Father's granting his holy spirit; [compare *Luke* xi. 11. and *Matt.* vii. 13.] the gift of the spirit is used by *Luke* to represent the same that *Matthew* represents by the phrase of bestowing good things: not but, strictly speaking, they are distinct, but, I apprehend, this shews that he which has the spirit of prayer to spread his wants before the Lord, may be assured his case shall be taken care of: the spirit given is an earnest of being brought into possession of the promised inheritance, which necessarily includes a being provided for in our way thither: thus the Apostle says, *he hath given us the earnest of the spirit*; [2 *Cor.* v. 5.] and he is expressly said to be the *earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.* [*Ephes.* i. 14.] This, I think, is a great argument for resting easy after we have committed our case to God: where the spirit is bestowed, he is a seal of every promise, both as to this life, and that which is to come.

Fifthly, The experience of Saints in every age, is another argument for the believer's satisfaction: time would fail to repeat instances. He is, and has been a prayer-hearing, and answering God; this is his name, and this has been his memorial in all generations: this name of his has been as a strong tower, to which the righteous run, and are safe: the Lord is a rock, tried and found faithful

faithful by all that have trusted him: they that know his name will put their trust in him, for he has never forsaken the soul that has relied upon him: *Noah* and *Abraham*, *Job* and *Samuel*, *David* and *Daniel*, men of prayer, committed their cause to him, and found him a present help in time of need; he saved *Noah* from the flood, *Abraham* from his fears, through every trying providence; he at last accomplished every thing promised; he extricated *Job* from his difficulties, notwithstanding he was so far sunk; he discomfited the *Philistines* at the intercession of *Samuel*. When *David* besought him, he delivered him from death, and tears and falling: When *Daniel* was in the lyons den, how wonderfully did he preserve him? these, and a multitude more, obtained salvation, when ruin was at their heels, and there seemed to be no help left; and why should your soul or mine be anxious, if, believing in him, we have committed our case by prayer to him? He is an unchangeable God, and with him there is no respect of persons, and the spirit of truth bears witness, he said not to the seed of Jacob seek ye me in vain.

Thus the relation God stands in to his people, his properties in that relation, the promises he has given, the blessings he has already bestowed, and the united experience and testimonies of believers in all ages, are great motives, and lay a strong foundation for satisfaction of mind in every circumstance: having notified our requests, we
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may undoubtedly rest easy, and lay aside all anxiety and distressing care. And this lays the believer under some obligations so to do; but of this in the next chapter.

C H A P. V.

Containing some observations to prove a Christian ought to lay aside his cares, when he has notified his requests to God, according to the direction of his word; with some general inferences from the whole of the subject.

HAVING offered various arguments to shew why a Christian may rest easy upon spreading his case before the Lord, we proceed to observe two or three things to prove he *ought*; indeed a reliance, resignation, and quietness of spirit under the changes of life, in the way of duty, is so healthful to the soul, that it must needs be incumbent on every one to labour as much as possible, and use every lawful means to attain it: the sufficient warrant for being thus satisfied, and living free from anxious care, is in itself a strong proof of obligation; and all those arguments brought to, and that do establish the said warrant have, in their own nature, a tendency to shew how much it is the duty of the believer to make use of this privilege; but that we may
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yet more fully understand, and be awakened to the discharge of our indispensable duty in this respect, I propose subjoining a few considerations, that directly point out the evil of not laying aside these cares, after having supplicated the throne of grace.

First, We ought, because this is the design of God in constituting the throne of grace ; he has opened a way through the vail of Christ's flesh ; that we might in this manner cast our burthens upon him ; to free the believer's soul from amazing, distracting cares and fears, is the end of God's permitting frequent prayers. Our prayers are not for information sake, nor are they to move him to love us. If they were for information we should be exposed to many slavish fears, we might question whether he either understood us rightly, or certainly and constantly remembered our case ; for he that is so ignorant as to want to be informed, is, or may be liable to forget : if they were to excite his love, how should we know, when in darkness, and before he has sensibly answered our cries, whether this point is gained ; under doubtful circumstances we should be distressed, lest we had not gained his favour ; then, indeed, waiting on God in prayer would not be a sufficient means of ease and satisfaction : but this is not the case neither, for we address a being of infinite wisdom and knowledge, who cannot be mistaken, or forget our case ;

case; and whose affection for us will admit of no question, when we consider his love is the cause of our being admitted to pray; he has freely opened a way of access, the mediator, thro' whom we have this access; is the fruit of his own love and grace, so also are the promises by which we are encouraged and instructed, and the spirit by whose aids we pray aright. It appears, therefore, that prayer is for our own advantage, to quiet and comfort our minds, the appointed means of disburthening our souls, and easing our hearts in this troublesome world. He that prays, and then distracts himself with cares and fears, as though he had not prayed, does not answer the design of God in erecting a throne of grace, and giving liberty for prayer; his bestowing blessings in this way, is calculated for the peace and satisfaction of our minds; therefore indulging thoughtfulness and care after praying, is acting a most unreasonable and foolish part.

Secondly, Believers ought to live free from cares in the use of prayer, because this is necessary for the honour of God, whom they profess to hope in, and pray to: these anxieties, after waiting on God with our case, reflect highly on the love, wisdom, power, and faithfulness of this our heavenly Father. A dissatisfied, fretful, peevish aspect, is but an ill omen; such a person you know, is but of little credit to his guardian and superior; yea, he disgraces his parent or

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master;

master, who has the care of him, and on whom he depends. When men professing godliness, and those who pretend to be a praying people, are perpetually anxious and careful, they administer to the infidelity and prophaneness of mankind: such bring great dishonour on the name of their God. Take a man in his carnal state, and how shall he be convinced that there is a God? or at least that there is that advantage in seeking to, and waiting upon him, which some pretend to, who call themselves his servants, and profess to hope in his covenant; when, notwithstanding their Interest in his favour, and constant application by prayer, they are as full of carking cares and tormenting fears, about temporal things, as others?

In all the appointments of infinite wisdom, two things are designed, the glory of God and the comfort of his people; these are so nearly allied, through the settlements of divine grace, that we cannot separate them. It is no indifferent matter whether we lay aside these cares or not; for by being careful in the manner described, we not only wound our own spirits, but bring a reproach on him we profess to serve: a dreadful instance of ingratitude, for the care and kindness he has shewn us, in setting up a throne of grace, and inviting us thither, for obtaining mercy and assistance in every time of need.

Add

Add, *Thirdly*, We ought thus to do; because it is necessary to shew we have really spread our wants before the Lord in the manner he has required; we are hereby to prove we have faithfully notified our requests as directed. I will not say the anxious, careful person, is altogether a prayerless person. A Christian may have prayed earnestly to God, opened his case, and upon first rising from his knees, think he shall be easy and resigned; but upon going into the world, some temptation steps in; he is off from his guard, and his mind is presently involved in these cares: so uncertain are our frames in the present weak and ensnaring state. But a man that is notorious for such a caring spirit, lays himself under suspicion of either neglecting prayer, or not praying as he ought to do, or not watching over his heart after prayer; for, if he was not culpable in one or more of these, he would not lay down that hope and expectation, proper to such who have committed their cause to God. All the appointments of God, for our good, will have their effect, if sincerely and rightly attended to; the deficiency must lie in ourselves, not in the means. If God has ordered prayer, that, thereby heartily committing our way to him; our minds may be disburthened from sinful care, our own unbelief and corruptions must be the cause of the anxiety that attends us after having so exercised ourselves; for God has appointed nothing in vain.

He that is an anxious person therefore, a person hurried and distracted in his mind, either has not prayed at all, (for worldly care will not suffer a man to put up a prayer if possible) or he has not prayed aright; unbelief and care have mingled in his addresses; many such prayers, the believer, on reflection, blushes at, and mourns over: we may often, upon a review, with grief observe, that what in the fear of God by faith we have put into the hands of our heavenly Father, these worldly affections, thro' unbelief, have, as it were, taken out again, even in an instant, before we have finished the confused and shameful supplication; neglect, or weakness, is usually the cause of our anxieties, unless we are betrayed into them through carelessness after prayer. The man who would approve himself one that really hopes for an interest in the divine favour, of having committed his soul and all his concerns into the hands of Christ, and evidence his submission to the will of God, (for all this is found in a right spiritual suppliant) must demonstrate it in a serenity of mind, by a holy indifferency, and in being *careful for nothing*. God only knows the heart, but there is always reason to be jealous of these caring persons.

Thus, if answering the end of God in the institution of prayer, the honour of him we profess to serve, and our own reputation, as professors, are of any weight, we ought to be easy, when we
have

have profess'd in prayer to have cast our care on God; without living satisfied and resigned, the use of prayer is lost, our Father himself is reproached, and we lay ourselves under a suspicion: how foolish, sinful, and ungrateful, then are these anxious cares?

We now close, with a few brief reflections on the whole of this subject, which branch will be the shorter, as we have occasionally anticipated, in several instances, what might have been brought under this head.

First, Through this proneness to a caring spirit, we see something of the vanity of this present life: such is our weakness, that there is nothing but what may subject us to cares and fears; all that is about us, every object we converse with, may entangle and distress us; learn not to seek for happiness from the creature, since, in every circumstance, we are liable to these perplexing anxieties. Let us never forget that there is no true peace to be obtained short of an application to God himself; no safety from these goads and arrows that wound our hearts, and drink up our spirits, if left to take their course; all is vanity and vexation of spirit, without his blessing and grace are imparted; such that seek for rest of soul, in the neglect of their duty to God, will find nothing but disappointment and sorrow.

Secondly, We learn something of the nature of prayer; when we come to the throne of grace,

we must open our hearts, and the concern of our minds; we are to notify our requests; the real breathings of our souls are to be set forth in our petitions: our heart's desire is necessary in our addresses to him that searches the heart; formal, lifeless words, are no prayers. Forms of expression indeed may express real desires, and I doubt not many serious, godly persons, do pour out their souls to God in forms of prayer: such who, thro' the prejudice of education, have been accustomed to that practice, may use it with sincerity and spirituality in publick; yet, from what conversation I have had with such persons, I find few, if any, who seem to have felt the power of divine grace on their souls, that can confine themselves to such measures in private. Of all spiritual duties, this of prayer seems the least to need a form, or indeed is the least capable of being confined to a form; in every thing we are to make known every request to God, this is the business we are to transact with our father in prayer; but so various and changeable are our circumstances in the present state, that it seems morally impossible any form should be sufficient to comprehend our requests under those different and numerous circumstances; nay, I cannot see how any form can be compiled by the most skilful ministers, but, if strictly attended to by their fellow Christians, will necessarily restrain them from expressing many of their desires before the Lord, at least in
that

that suitable manner they would, by the grace of God, freely do, if they were not limited by such a form. A believer knows so little of what the condition of his life, or the frame of his heart, may be the next day or next hour, that it seems impossible he should, in the most spiritual disposition, or in the exercise of the noblest gifts, at any time dictate what shall be his future prayer; and if upon these and such like accounts, a Christian cannot at any time form a prayer for himself, how much less shall a few, though great and good men, whose experience can reach but short, however, of the general and universal experience of believers, be thought capable of dictating prayers to be constantly used by others, whose exercises differ from any thing perhaps they have ever found, and who are thus liable to fresh trials every day? the infinite number of necessities, from inward or outward exercises, every Christian is liable to, seems a great objection to forms of prayer; the inconveniences of which, I think appears in a strong light, when we consider, in prayer we are to use the utmost freedom in laying open all our hopes and fears to the Lord, that exercise our hearts under every circumstance. However, let the judgment of a Christian be for or against forms, it is his incumbent duty to watch against being *formal*, which may be the case, where no set expressions, or exact form of words are used. The object of prayer looks to

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the heart; every one should see to it, that his
soul desires, what his petitions set forth: and
we should all be thankful we have liberty thus to
express every request; especially, when we con-
sider, God has promised his holy spirit to them
that ask it; which naturally leads to another re-
mark, viz.

Thirdly, What a suitable blessing is the
spirit of prayer and supplication, this gift is
necessary, blessed be God it is secured in the
new covenant: God has declared his determina-
tion to put his spirit within his people and
pour it out upon them, his aids are necessary to
help their infirmities, to give them utterance,
and assist them in all their addresses; and that
he has appointed this holy spirit of prayer should
never leave them, but abide with them for ever,
is a mercy beyond expression. We can never e-
nough admire the wisdom and goodness of God,
who, foreseeing our wants and weakness, has
made this suitable and gracious provision for us:
having a portion of this spirit, how thankful
should we be; surely then we ought to be satisfi-
ed and easy under every dispensation.

Fourthly, We see ourselves under unspeakable
obligations to Christ, for meriting access to the
throne of grace; how much are we beholden
to the redeemer for the expence he has been at
to procure this liberty of praying, since prayer
is so necessary and advantageous? he purchased
this

this freedom, and made way for our profitable addressees to heaven; it is by having his blood, that we have this *boldness to enter into the holiest of all*; and having this high priest entered into heaven, we may come boldly to this throne and find mercy in time of need; had not he shed his blood, and engaged in this mediation, our cries could never reached for relief; though God affords relief to his creatures, being good to the unthankful and evil in a providential way, and some that have no saving share in the undertakings of Christ reap many temporal favours, their requests are given, and God, in respect to that supply he affords, may, in a sense, be said to hear their cry; yet, truly and strictly, there are no prayers heard but through Christ; our cries would have been all in vain, had not Christ opened the ears of mercy, by opening his sacred side, and shedding his precious blood, thereby satisfying divine justice: the devils, therefore, though creatures more noble in their nature, never can pray, have no invitation, liberty or freedom to this privilege; their mouths are shut from prayer, and if they were to roar ever so loud for a blessing, or for mercy, the ears of God would be shut, he would not hear. Prayer is not only an opening of our wants, or crying out under our misery, but in this duty, when rightly perform'd, there is a committing our case into the hands of God as able and willing to help us, having graciously

250 *Constant prayer a remedy against* Part III.
ciously revealed his readiness to assist us for the
sake of his Son; it is a reposing ourselves on God:
but devils have no promise or encouragement to
do this, nor would any of the race of fallen *Adam*,
were it not for the second *Adam*, Christ, who has
reconciled us to God by his death; believers have
this liberty at no less expence than that of their
Redeemer's life; our audience and acceptance are
alone through him, and through his blood,
without the shedding of which we should never
have been suffered to put up one petition to God
as our Father; but our most earnest supplica-
tions had been shut out and utterly rejected.
Every prayer therefore, our father hears and
answers; lays us under fresh obligations to love
the Lord Jesus Christ, and be concern'd for his
honour.

In fine, what a foolish thing it is to neglect
prayer: prayer is an heart-easing, soul-relieving
duty; it is amazing stupidity, to walk about
fretting and complaining of our cares and sor-
rows, and to live in the allowed omission of
what God has kindly appointed for our ease and
relief: considering the many vexations we are
exposed to in every condition, the proneness of
our weak minds to distract ourselves with cares
and fears, and that this is the divine institution
for relief, we may justly wonder how they that
live without prayer, live at all; we may be sure
they don't live comfortably. The hearts of

prayer.

prayerless persons are full of pain and heaviness in the midst of their affected jollity; upon every gloomy, doubtful circumstance, the reflections of their mind double their distress; they dare not look up to that God whom they have despised, in a contempt of their duty; or at least their addresses are attended with terror and confusion; and to look within, encreases their torment. A prayerless person, is either a judicially blinded, harden'd, fearless person, or he lives a most distressing comfortless life; and when in streights, is at the verge of despair. He is far off from God, has no hand to pull out his thorns, or balm and oil to heal the wounds they make in his spirit; the promises of God usually yield no support in a day of calamity to such a person; and if in remarkable distress he would have recourse to them, his conscience tells him it is presumption in the neglect of that footstool he is an utter stranger to. But I have principally regarded, in this treatise, the Christian, who cannot be utterly without prayer, yet may be enticed into an omission of it in some degree; and grow careless and backward; let such remember, in proportion to their declension in this respect, will be their confusion and incapacity in the day of God's visitation; and by so much the less they apply to the throne of grace, by so much the more will they be exposed to the piercing influence of those cares that interrupt their spiritual joy and communion

communion with that God who is seated there. May we all therefore be favoured with a supply of that holy Comforter, through whose grace and assistance we may be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, make known our request unto God with thanksgiving; so shall we avoid much misery and shame, and persevere in peace to that eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, has promised to all them that fear him, through Christ Jesus, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

AN

A N

H Y M N,

Alluding to the foregoing Subject:

I.

*FOND of the creature — unbelief,
With fears our minds possess;
Each painful thought produces grief,
And adds to our distress.*

II.

*In vain our spirits search and try,
We hover in suspense;
'Till, help'd by grace, to heav'n we fly,
And trust wise providence.*

III.

*Our heavenly Parent sees and waits,
Yea kindly doth invite
Our burthen'd souls in ev'ry streight;
For prayer is his delight.*

IV. Come

IV.

*Come, Saints, resign your anxious care
That pierce your tender breasts:
And leave with God, by constant pray'r,
The whole of your requests.*

V.

*Let praise be mingled with your cry,
For mercies you receive;
Returning goodness shall supply,
And ev'ry want relieve.*

VI.

*Immortal Dove on us descend,
Anoint our hearts and tongues;
Thine aid vouchsaf'd, our days we'll spend
In pray'rs, and joyful songs.*

The End of the third Part.

*The heart's preservative; or, the
peace of God a godly man's pro-
tection.*

P A R T IV.

B E I N G

Some brief remarks on the peace of
God, through which a believer
perseveres to eternal life.

W I T H

A representation how this peace, as the
fruit of the spirit in the soul, becomes
subserving, under his divine influences,
to prevent sorrow, and effectually to se-
cure the Christian from final apostacy.

To which are subjoined,

Some observations tending to demonstrate the
necessity and usefulness of absolute promises
concerning infallible salvation, as they encou-
rage to holiness, and strengthen the believer
for duty.

*Great peace have they which love thy law: and
nothing shall offend them. Psalm cxix. 165.*

*And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and
the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance
for ever. Isaiah xxx.i. 17.*



the heart's preference; and the
peace of God a gift from
heaven.

PART II.

THE first remarks on the peace of
God, through which a believer
attains to eternal life, are
that it is a gift from heaven,
and that it is a peace which
surpasses all understanding, and
is given to us by God, and
effectually to us.

It is a peace which is not
of this world, but of the
world to come, and is a
peace which is not of the
flesh, but of the Spirit.

It is a peace which is not
of the law, but of the
Gospel, and is a peace
which is not of the
letter, but of the Spirit.

THE
P R E F A C E.

Reader,

AS ignorance is the cause of that contempt which is so frequently cast upon the most excellent objects, the substance of the following lines cannot expect to meet with a general acception, since the matter therein contained is not understood by the generality of mankind: it is a melancholly truth, that every individual of fallen Adam's race is naturally, under the wrath of God, exposed to ruin by spiritual enemies; and that every man by nature is very insensible of this his wretched condition: hence the Gospel of peace is slighted, and the wonderful provision of divine grace, so suitable and necessary for lost Sinners, makes no delightful impression upon them; for they are blind to all its excellencies, and it is impossible that the rational
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mind should take any true pleasure, where it discerns no beauty or importance.

Multitudes are passing to an eternal state, without any manner of concern about their acceptance with God, and future salvation; wholly immersed in sensuality: they live like Athiests or Deists, as though there were no God, or providence, or judgment to come: to such the necessity of reconciliation with God, and preservation from sin and Satan, are impertinent, and as idle tales; for they have no heart-affecting sense of these things; yea, scarcely believe the existence of either.

Besides these, there are not a few, who, though they have felt some legal conviction, and horror of conscience, and therefore cannot but be thoughtful of their souls, and of escaping divine vengeance, yet, not being thoroughly enlightened, but left under the influence of their natural blindness, with respect to the way of salvation, are, in the pride of their hearts, going about to make their peace with God, to pacify his anger by

P R E F A C E.



by some works and doings of their own, and think themselves capable, by their natural powers, to avoid the evil of temptation, and to walk in such a manner as to recommend themselves to the divine favour: These persons are offended with the way of salvation, by a crucified Redeemer, and are seemingly greater enemies to it, than the bulk of thoughtless wretches; these last only despise, the other oppose and endeavour to destroy the doctrine of it. Such persons cannot rightly conceive of, or relish the doctrine of the efficacious grace of God, wrought and maintained by the holy spirit, necessary to the performance of duties aright, to the mortification of sin, and to the preservation of the heart from apostacy and destruction: all that joy and peace spoken of, with which the believer's heart is exercised, and through which it is preserved in the view of Christ's blood, and under the influence of his spirit, are to them unintelligible, and the report thereof they treat with scorn. Sensualists and legalists are not the hopeful objects of my address.

But to those who have been thoroughly convinced of sin, whose hearts have been

broken with the terrors of a broken law, ministring wrath and condemnation to their consciences; to them who have really felt their lusts irritated, taking occasion by this law to shew themselves, and to domineer in their souls, this good news is highly acceptable: he that has been oppressed with guilt, and greatly troubled with a sense of indwelling corruption, whose eyes have been opened to behold his danger, and who has been ready to perish under the just apprehensions of divine justice; I say, such an one can embrace it as glad tidings, that there is peace with God, and peace from God: the peace of God, and the grace of God, are subjects his soul can dwell upon, and rejoice in: from such persons, I hope, under a divine blessing, to find some fruit of my endeavour.

If any thing herein presented should administer to the entertainment and confirmation of those, who have already beheld, with satisfaction, this wonderful peace, and long experienced the effects of it on their souls; or if it should be the means of leading any wounded, troubled conscience, to rest and comfort, my end is answered; knowing

knowing it cannot fail of redounding in many thanksgivings to God, who has displayed such love among the sinful sons of men. To be the instrument of conveying the consolations of God's grace to his chosen, and the occasion of their giving that glory due to that grace provided for, and bestowed upon them, is an honour and pleasure exceeding any desert of mine; however, this I hope I should ever esteem an over-ballance to the disgrace it may bring upon me, with those whom I pity in their mistaken notion of themselves, and the method of salvation, while I admire their natural talents, and value their friendship as men; and, as light as they make of it, I think it of so much importance to them as well as myself, that I see no better way of testifying my affection to them, than to pray for their enlightening, and that they may share in that peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

The Apostle James says, the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace. We cannot be fruitful, or promote the Gospel and the conversion of souls, except the wisdom which is from above is conspicuous in our words and actions; we

must bridle our passions and deny ourselves, if we would be useful in our profession; and it were heartily to be wished, that all who profess themselves the sons of peace, would labour a recommendation of it in a conversation answerable to their character.

In order therefore to convince such who oppose themselves, let it be our constant care, who profess to rely on that peace made with God by the death of Christ, and to have received that peace into our hearts we are speaking of, to testify the reality of this grace, in bringing forth the fruits of peace. If professors are as anxious and complaining, as angry and contentious, as fearful and unstable as others, in proportion to the notice carnal persons take of these things, they are so much the more hardened in their unbelief: if Christians do not live in love and peace with one another, and shew by their demeanour that they would, as much as in them lieth, live peaceably with all men, the world must look on all pretences to this peace of God ruling in the heart as mere cant and enthusiasm; it strengthens their prejudices, and becomes the occasion of binding men faster in ignorance, and unbelief;

unbelief: besides, the baseness of sin in itself, the honour of God, which is greatly affected by the indulgence of pride and wrath, &c. in a professor, the disturbance and anguish it gives our own hearts, &c. I say, besides these and many other weighty objections to the allowance of iniquity, compassion for the souls of others should also animate our zeal in the mortification of our lusts.

May the God of peace pour out an abundant measure of his spirit on professors of every rank, and christian societies of every denomination; that humility and love, heavenly mindedness and peace, might be so apparent in the conduct of such who name the name of Christ, as that the foolish may be put to silence; the enquiring, serious person, may be satisfied and encouraged; and in a word, that stronger believers, though differing in some lesser matters, may mutually edify each other, walking together, as far as they have attained, by the same rule, minding the same thing; for hereunto we are called, and while we are thus at peace among ourselves we may expect his presence, and blessing, by which we may hope to bring others to the knowledge of the truth, and

be perfected ourselves in the grace of God; for the God of love and peace will be 'with us, and this very God of peace will sanctify us wholly, and preserve our whole spirit, soul and body, blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the following hints be of some special use and advantage, and the occasion of stirring up others to write more largely and judiciously on the same subject; and may you and I, Reader, obtain mercy to be faithful and diligent; that we may be found of Christ in peace, and without spot at his appearance and kingdom.

Farewel.

PART

PART IV.

The heart's preservative; or, the peace of God a godly man's protection.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 7.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

CHAP. I.

The text introduced, with a brief description of the peace of God in an objective sense, and how this peace passeth all understanding.

THIS comfortable declaration, the Apostle subjoins to several weighty and important exhortations given his beloved seals at *Philippi*, respecting their temper and conduct, and delivered under the immediate inspiration of the holy Ghost, remains recorded for the animating every believer to a conversation becoming the Gospel. The right exercise

exercise of spiritual duty is excited through the love of God, shed abroad, and improved on the conscience by the power of the divine spirit: accordingly, under the influence of that heavenly Guide, it was the practice of the Apostles, who usually closed their Epistles with stirring up the Saints to the duties of the Christian life, to lead them, by some sweet Gospel promise, into a compliance with the mind of Christ, as in the case before us: it is obvious on reflection, that great faith, patience, and hope, are necessary in the present state to that life of joy, moderation and prayer, pressed in the preceeding verses; in our text there is food for the nourishment of all these graces, so that the believer, meditating on this passage, may, under a divine blessing, be invigorated, and quickened to the exercise of himself in the manner before described; and walk as one whose name is written in the book of life.

There is a strict connexion between this and the foregoing verses; some read them optatively, as though they were expressive of the great desire of our inspired Author after the preservation of these *Philippians*, and their having sufficiency of grace to persevere: none that read the endearing titles with which he addresses them in the first verse of this chapter, or considers his prayers for them in the beginning and close of this Epistle, can doubt his earnest desire after every thing necessary to their perfection and salvation; but it seems

seems most easy and natural to understand them as an assertion, or a positive declaration, made by divine authority, including a promise for their comfort and encouragement; and in this light I shall consider them. Two general parts are considerable in these words, *viz.* First, The subject matter of which the Apostle treats. Secondly, The advantage he asserts should arise to the Christian in the exercise of his duty.

First, The subject matter, *viz.* The peace of God, which is further set forth by one of its distinguishing and adorable qualities, it *passeth all understanding*. The peace of God may be taken either objectively, for that state of reconciliation and favour which such whose names are written in the book of life are in, thro' the blood and intercession of Christ; or it may be understood subjectively, for that peace in the believer's heart, which flows, under the influence of the divine spirit, from a comfortable sense of his interest in the foremention'd peace, made with God by his Son: there are different sentiments with respect to the meaning of this place; and though I judge the latter the intention of it, yet some being of opinion the former is at least included, and it being in reality the foundation of the latter, it may not be altogether unprofitable to touch a little on the peace of God in that sense, and shew you how it *passeth all understanding*.

First,

First, Then the peace of God objectively, is that state of reconciliation and favour, which such, whose names are written in the book of life, are in, through the blood and intercession of Christ, who is *our peace*, and has *made peace through the blood of his Cross*. [Ephes. ii. 14. Colos. i. 20. compared.] Through the fall, there is a quarrel betwixt God and us; he that made us has a controversy with us, and sin has set us at a distance from him; every individual of the human race is involved in this breach, considered in their first head, and being thus under guilt, are *children of wrath by nature*: there is not, nor can there be any peace for us, consider'd as guilty sinners, with that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who has sin in the utmost detestation and abhorrence; but Christ having made an attonement, there is peace with God, which every true believer may rejoice in. This may be stiled God's peace, or the peace of God.

First, He laid the plan and design of reconciliation and peace; it was he that contrived and propos'd it; it sprung entirely out of his own heart; it is therefore said to be *according to the good pleasure which he purpos'd in himself*; [Ephes. i. 9.] the revelation of it, in general, or the application of it to particular persons, is stiled *making known the mystery of his will*, and said to be *hid in God*: it arose purely from his good pleasure,
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IV. Chap. I. *a godly man's protection.* 269

he resolved it for his own glory ; as his love was the motive, his wisdom contrived it ; it was his scheme. There was a council held upon it, but at this the most glorious creature in heaven was not permitted to assist ; what is said respecting God's selecting those that are included in it, [*Rom. xi. 34.*] may be applied to the whole of it ; *who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor ?*

Secondly, He provided the Peace-maker, gave his Son to make reconciliation for iniquity, that there might be peace ; he spared not his own dear Son, he not only found out the way, but furnished the means ; the substitute necessary was God's gift, the donation of the Father ; on this account it may be stiled *the peace of God*.

Thirdly, It may be so called, as it was made with God ; he has reconciled us *to himself*. [*2 Cor. v. 19.*] God is not only the author of the scheme, and bestower of the means, but also the object with whom this peace was made ; hence, Christ, in yielding up himself, is said to be *a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour*. [*Ephes. v. 2.*] Now the peace of God in this sense, without which it could never have been said there is true peace on earth, *passeth all understanding* ; this is one of its adorable qualities : it was within the compass of the divine mind, he devised it as was before observed ; his understanding is infinite ; but it *passeth all created understanding* ; it *surpasseth*
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the understanding of the noblest intellectual powers, Angels or Men. This peace is a wonderful peace, there is no searching of it out. It is wonderful, if we consider it either in itself, in the means by which it was brought about, or in its effects.

(1.) In itself, the very existence of this peace is, all things considered, amazing; that there should be peace with God for Rebel-man, considering the perfections of the divine being, and after the display of his vengeance on the apostate angels, is very astonishing indeed, and what no creature could have imagined, had it not been revealed: we cannot reasonably suppose the holy angels, excellent as those glorious creatures are in wisdom, could once think, when they surveyed the justice of God, conspicuous in his nature, exerted in that awful dispensation of casting down to hell their fellow spirits that sinned, that after man had involved himself in guilt and pollution, there ever would have been peace and reconciliation betwixt God and any of this wretched race.

Again (2) it is wonderful, or *passeth all understanding*, if we consider the means by which it was executed and brought about, viz. by the eternal Son of God's taking upon him our nature, and dying in the room and stead of his people: the highest order of creatures, by their natural understanding, could not devise which way

way it was possible, till the will of God was revealed, and the council of the eternal three broke forth, which I apprehend was discovered to the angels themselves, through the manifestation of it to the sons of men: for to them, we are informed *by the church is known the manifold wisdom of God; i. e. redemption.* [*Ephesians* iii. 10.] That is by the revelation and execution of God's gracious purpose is unfolded this mystery: from the first promise indeed, no hesitation could take place with respect to the *fact*, the certainty of it was indubitable, though difficult beyond expression; when those celestial spirits saw the eternal Son of God, that glorious person who was possess'd of every perfection, and to whom nothing could be impossible, undertake to bring about this peace, they immediately understood it would infallibly be accomplished; yet this grand affair strikes them with great admiration, and surpasses their understanding: there is such a mystery of condescension and grace, in his taking on him *the form of a servant*, whom they knew to be God; such a mystery of the union of the two natures in the person, the sufferings and glory of the redeemer, that they cannot fully comprehend it; the Gospel is therefore what the angels are said *to desire to look into*; [*1 Peter* i. 12.] doubtless great is this *mystery of Godliness*.

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But further (3) it is a wonderful peace with regard to the effects of it on those who are included in it: the articles of this peace are sure to be fulfilled, and the fruits of it everlasting; there is no breaking this peace, nor is it possible for those that are in Christ *Jesus* to fall into condemnation; though they are naturally chargeable with ten thousand transgressions, for which they are humbling themselves before the God of all this grace, yet none can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect, so as to bring them under judicial punishment for the guilt of sin: it is an amazing peace that thus becomes effectual, and makes provision for the pardon of every sin, and secures the honour of God, in publishing the multitude of his tender mercies, as out-numbering (if I may so say) the multitude of his peoples sins: besides, what it bestows, as well as what it removes, is beyond our comprehension: the soul that has a share in this peace, is advanced to more honour and happiness than mankind were in before the fall: there is a greater nearness to God, in consequence of the union of our nature to the divine, in the person of the mediator, and the vital union of believers to Christ, which his undertakings procure, and his spirit produces on those for whom he engaged, than was proper to our natures in a state of innocency.

We are, through Christ, raised to the dignity of sons, to whom the angels are ministering spirits;

spirits; we are made partakers of the divine nature, and heirs of God in such a sense, as no natural condition, or works of ours, in a state of rectitude itself, could have entitl'd us to: on these, and such like accounts, this peace *passeth all understanding*, or exceeds even the capacity of Angels to comprehend. I need not say it passes all human understanding; the capacities of men, naturally, are inferior to the Angels; *the natural man* cannot discern this great peace, which is one of the great things of the spirit of God, that must be *spiritually discerned*: experience shews, that the report of it is an offence to their understanding, and carnal reason; the preaching of the cross is foolishness, it requires faith, and the spirit of God, to enlighten the understanding rightly to apprehend and apply this glorious way of salvation: this peace is not thoroughly comprehended by the renewed soul itself; after a person has participated of the regenerating influence of the spirit, and been favoured even with large discoveries, still it remains unfathomable by the believer: Christians, when their hearts are warm'd with the contemplation of this peace they have with God, through the Lord *Jesus Christ*, they are ready to say with astonishment, God hath *so* loved us, and to ask *what manner of love* the Father hath bestowed on them? yea they are even lost in the unsearchable pursuit, and ready to cry out, *Oh the heights and depths, the lengths*

and breadths! for surely it is *past finding out*; it passeth knowledge.

This is the peace of God in one sense, of which we have a revelation in the sacred writings, to the glory of divine grace, and the great encouragement of all sensible sinners; *viz.* reconciliation made thro' the blood of Christ, a method of peace of which God is the author, giver, and object; and which is so wonderful as to exceed all created understanding, in regard to its existence, the means by which it was brought about, and the effects it produces; taking it in this sense, as some do, what is added, *viz.* that it should *keep their hearts and minds thro' Christ Jesus*, seems to intimate there is provision made in that peace for the certain preservation of the hearts and minds of true believers: there is no question but, by the covenant of peace, such who were included in it, chosen in their head, Christ, had grace given them in him for their everlasting security, and the infallible preservation of their souls, through all the snares, temptations, and difficulties, that would attend them in the present state: *great peace have they who love God's law, and nothing shall offend them.* [*Psalms* cxix. 165.] such shall never be ruined; for the Lord God is *a sun and a shield*; he gives *grace and glory*, and will never suffer his righteous ones to be moved. [*Psalms* lxxxiv. 11. and *Psalms* lv. 22. compared.]

C H A P. II.

The peace of God subjectively consider'd, and that this is the sense of the Apostle in the Text; the advantage arising therefrom explained, with a general observation.

ALTHO' the state of reconciliation and favour the elect of God have; and every true believer may assure himself of, through the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, may be justly styled the Peace of God, and may, with the highest reason, be represented as passing all understanding, agreeable to the foregoing chapter; I rather apprehend, considering the scope of the Apostle, the peace of God, in this place, is to be taken subjectively, and that by it we are, here, to understand that peace which flows into the conscience, and diffuses itself through the soul of a believer, on the manifestation and application of that peace there is with God for him, through the attonement of his great surety; when he by faith beholds and embraces, under the influences of the divine spirit, this method of salvation, it yields peace to the mind, it begets, maintains, and promotes a peace in the heart, greatly subservient in its operations on the soul to the preservation of it; as we may see hereafter.

The Apostle is evidently, through the preceding verses, stirring up these *Philippians*, to whom he writes, to the exercise of their graces, and the diligent discharge of several duties of the christian life: in this passage he subjoins, for their encouragement, an assurance of some great advantage that should arise through the exercising themselves after this manner, a blessing that should be imparted to them this way, *viz.* That they should find peace of conscience, a holy serenity of mind, confidence of spirit through the blood of Christ, in virtue of grace communicated from him; which peace should be effectual, under the conduct of his spirit, to preserve and keep them from defection in their souls. This inward tranquility and peace is procured and experienced in the Christian's heart, in the view of that reconciliation made by the Redeemer, and all the blessings that flow from it; it is therefore produced through the exercise of faith, by which believers cast their care on the God of peace, as a God at peace with them; in consequence of which they live with a holy indifferency to the world, are animated to mortify their carnal appetites and affections, and live a life of rejoicing in *Christ Jesus*: it is no other than that peace and joy in believing, spoken of in scripture; a specimen of which you have recorded in *Rom. v. 1. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, &c.* This you see, on consulting the latter part
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of the foregoing chapter, was in a view of Christ's being *delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*; whence noble consolation and courage arose, and fortified the minds of these Saints against every temptation, and under the greatest distress, as appears from the following verses.

I find the like phrase used but once more in the New Testament, *viz. in Col. iii. 15. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts*: the Apostle in that place is exhorting to the same duties and graces recommended in our context; for patience, meekness, humility, &c. in the preceding verses, are all included in Christian moderation; as spiritual joy is clearly set forth in what follows after; such as being *thankful, admonishing one another in Psalms, Hymns, &c.* To a disposition for the discharge of these duties, this peace of God we are speaking of (produced in the soul through a prospect of pardoning mercy) greatly conduces; when that consideration influences the mind to purity and charity, and spiritualizes the whole frame of the inward man, it may be said to *rule in our hearts*; it cheers, moderates, and composes the soul; sitting, as some learned divines have represented it, like an arbitrator mediating and governing every affection: where this blessing of peace is imparted and wrought in the mind, it frequently, under the influence of the divine spirit, so exercises the soul as to regu-

late and guide every passion and affection; where this peace rules, it produces those holy habits and spiritual motions mentioned in the verses before our text; and the more the Christian is exercising himself in the manner before described, the more this peace is increased and strengthened; and, where it prevails, one of the blessed effects and consequences of it is preservation, which, for the encouragement of these Saints to continue to press forward, our author assures them of; *it shall keep your hearts and minds; q. d.*

“ My dearly beloved, I beseech you live by faith,
“ rejoicing in *Christ Jesus*, as him in whom you
“ have every thing necessary to your compleat
“ salvation; be courageous therefore and mortify
“ your corruptions, shewing a kind, good, and
“ peaceable spirit towards all men; lay aside
“ those fruitless anxieties your minds are inci-
“ dent to through unbelief, and with thankful-
“ ness spread your wants continually before the
“ Lord; in so doing you will find great peace
“ possessing your souls more and more, which
“ will certainly preserve you from those destruc-
“ tive evils which overtake and ruin such who
“ are given up to the indulgence of their carnal
“ lusts and appetites.” This brings me to the
second general branch of the words, *viz.* The
advantage the Apostle asserts should arise to the
believer in the exercise of his duty. This peace
imparted, enlarged, and diffused through the
soul

soul, shall be instrumental of their preservation; spiritual safety and security is the substance of the blessing promised, *shall keep your hearts and minds*; in the former expression are literally comprehended the will and affections, in the latter the understanding and judgment; the whole soul in all its faculties is here set forth.

It may not be amiss to take notice that the promise is not a preservation from outward trouble: it is not said it shall keep your fortunes or earthly treasures, or your bodies, but it shall keep your hearts and minds; a man may be at peace with God, and have the grace of God ruling in his heart, this grace may discover itself in every suitable exercise in life, and yet he may suffer the loss of every thing in the world; thro' afflictions and persecutions he may have his soul continually in his hand, and even loose his natural life in the way of his duty, and still this promise be fulfilled: neither the goodness of our state Godward, the greatness of our grace, nor the number of our duties, performed in the best of frames, can secure us from natural and providential changes. The promise assures the preservation of our souls; this keeping of our hearts, our text promises, is of the greatest importance, for out of them are *the issues of life*, and as the heart is, so is the person both as to state and frame.

Well, these are to be kept; the term signifies to watch over with great care, diligence and power,

power, as with a military guard to defend and preserve from evil: applied to the case in hand, it denotes that the influence of this divine grace or peace communicated to, and exercised by the believer, shall defend him from many evils to which he is naturally exposed, and particularly from defection and apostacy; for this seems ultimately intended; keep them from wickedly departing in their hearts from God, and returning, like a dog to his vomit, unto the indulgence of their lusts, after they had made a profession of holiness, as some did, mentioned in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, whose end, after all their form of godliness, will be destruction; this peace shall shield the mind from the poisonous effects of Satan's darts, so that the wicked one shall not touch them so as to cause a defection in their souls.

It may have reference to that freedom and security the Christian's heart has, in proportion to the exercise of his grace, and the influence of this peace, from that sorrow, vexation, and trouble, which are the consequences of carelessness and sloth, whereby men fall into hurtful snares, defile, entangle and discompose their hearts, and are often thrown into such confusion and distress as to be almost ready to go distracted: keep your affections from being entangled and divided thro' the cares of the world, deceitfulness of riches, and lusts of other things; keep your
minds

minds from falling into confusion and darkness; in a word, keep you in possession of yourselves: when the soul is thus exercising itself, this peace is a preservative against the anxiety and distress that flow from unbelief, neglect of prayer, and not exercising trust in God as a covenant God: indulgence of our lusts, and neglect of duty, banishes peace, joy, and serenity of mind; nor can the comforting influence of the divine spirit be expected, when men give themselves up to a carnal spirit, live in a forgetfulness of God, and an omission of their duty; but such a reliance on Christ, the deportment and conversation recommended by the Apostle, will, through the riches of divine grace, be attended with the income of his heavenly influences, who sheds abroad peace in the soul, and thereby secures the believer from trouble and distress, according to that sweet declaration of the prophet; *thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.* [Isaiab xxvi. 3.] A careless Christian is always a comfortless one; whereas, diligence in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty, as directed, promotes that peace which will prevent much sorrow: in which we see the preservation of the believer's peace is ascribed to the power and grace of God, who alone can create and maintain true spiritual peace; and it is also evident he communicates this peace through faith; the happy subject enjoys it in a way

way of believing, which grace of faith, being in lively exercise, will make the soul diligent in those duties exhorted to in the preceding verses of the chapter wherein is our text; in consequence of which, the Apostle gives them the assurance from this peace of God.

However, it is not to be confined to this only, but is applicable to, and comprehensive of their final perseverance, and preservation from utter ruin: this peace of God shall keep from despair, turning back and apostatizing; *we are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation*; by means of what is exhorted to, Christians are favoured with such a measure of peace from God, as shall be effectual, in the hands of the divine spirit, to prevent their defection. To all this is added the way in which this grace is bestowed, *viz.* through *Christ Jesus*, who is the great medium of all spiritual blessings, he that has made reconciliation; through whom alone the awakened sinner can dare to rely upon God, and have access to the throne of grace; or through *i. e.* through the merits of *Christ Jesus*; for all the Christian's diligence does not entitle him to the communication of this peace, and certain security thro' it; it is all of free grace therefore given by promise, it is through the merits and intercession of Christ we are prevented from falling into condemnation, the consideration of which yields peace to the mind; and it is in consequence

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of the same, that we are made partakers of that spirit, the fruit of which is *peace*.

This promise was admirably adapted to raise and encourage the minds of these believers, who, on account of the ungodly conversation of some who pretended to be Christians, and the cruel treatment of open adversaries, were ready to be terrified and cast down; and seems levelled against those fears that often arise in the mind of a believer, disheartening him under dark providences, producing apprehensions of sinking, perishing, being overcome and ruined, &c. These open a door to those pernicious anxieties that stir up the lusts of the flesh, and hinder rejoicing in *Christ Jesus*; which anxieties are cautioned against in the foregoing verse: thus you see this promise contains, in general, an assurance that the grace of God, (for this peace is no other than a species of divine grace in the soul) shall be sufficient for them, to comfort and strengthen them for perseverance through all difficulties and temptations. In short, as it stands connected with the sixth verse, the substance seems to be this, *viz.* That on laying aside their anxieties, and keeping close to prayer, with a reliance on the grace of God in *Christ Jesus*, they might be certain of enjoying peace, and eternal security: now since the heart and mind is the object of such infallible care and preservation, through the influence of this peace spoken of in our text, I cannot but look upon it

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as chiefly regarding the final perseverance of the Saints; the assurance of which is a great inducement to joy, moderation, and every other duty exhorted to in the context, as I may hereafter have occasion to shew; but at present let this doctrinal point be observed, arising from the words thus explained, *viz.* “The peace of God, experienced by the believer, through the exercise of faith, as it passeth understanding, so it becomes effectual for preserving the soul from defection and apostacy.” A particular consideration of this doctrine will be the subject of the following chapters.

C H A P. III.

Reasons why the peace experienced by the believer is styled The peace of God, and in what respects it may be said to pass all understanding; with an observation on this branch of the subject.

THE doctrine advanced at the close of the foregoing chapter, is this, *viz.* The peace of God experienced by the believer thro’ the exercise of faith, as it passeth understanding, so it becomes effectual for preserving the soul from defection and apostacy.

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We have already observed, that there is an internal peace and tranquility of soul arises from a prospect of our interest in that state of peace and reconciliation we have with God, through our Lord *Jesus Christ*, according to *Romans v.* at the beginning, and which every believer has more or less the experience of: this peace is the subject now before us, and which, in allusion to the promise from whence we gathered it, we denominate the *peace of God that passeth understanding*; concerning which it is asserted, it is efficacious for preserving the heart from apostacy: the method therefore in which I propose to discuss this point is as follows, *viz.*

First, To enquire why this gracious habit and temper is stiled the *peace of God*.

Secondly, To observe in what respects it may be said to *pass understanding*.

Thirdly, To shew how it operates to *keep the mind*, and influence the believer to perseverance.

First, Then we are to enquire why this gracious habit and temper is stiled *the peace of God*, or, in other words, a divine peace.

(1) It may be so called on account of its author, who is a divine person; the holy spirit is the author of it, the fruit of the spirit is *peace*; [*Gal. v. 21.*] it is attained through the exercise of
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that faith which is of the operation of God: the spirit quickeneth, not only in regeneration and the first implantation of spiritual life, but his kind influences invigorate and strengthen the mind in the progress and exercise of the divine life in the soul: the new man is created and sustained by the spirit of Christ, and is beholden to his operations for all its actings and exercises; he irradiates the understanding, and raises the affections by revealing the purpose, covenant, and things of Christ to the soul; he enables Christians to take a view of, and contemplate upon their freedom from condemnation by the blood of Christ, and to receive the atonement; and thus fills them with peace and joy in believing.

(2) It may be denominated *the peace of God*, as it is the gift of God: it is given and bestowed by God the Father, and our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the divine spirit himself, whose peculiar work it is to beget, preserve, and draw into exercise this peace, is sent forth from the Father and the Son, he comes in the name of the latter, and is the gift of the former [*John* xiv. 26. 1 *John* iv. 13.] this peace is dispensed from God; accordingly in this, and several other of the Apostle's epistles, after the dedication or inscription, this prayer is put up for those to whom he writes, *grace and peace from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* chap. i. 2. The Father is stiled *the God of peace*, on account

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count of that abundant peace he bestows on his children thro' Christ; and the Son is the prince of peace, he bears this illustrious and endearing title for the peace he dispenses, as well as the peace he procured; peace is bestowed by him, on whom, and in what degree soever he pleases; the Apostle therefore wishes or prays on closing his 2d Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, *now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.* [chap. iii. 16.]

(3) It is founded on the divine word, and for this reason is not improperly called the peace of God; there is a great deal of false peace indulged through the vain imaginations of men's hearts; people cry peace to themselves without any sufficient foundation; as when men rejoice in their own works, and think to make their peace with God by their doings and performances; the satisfaction taken from such things, as the foundation of our peace with God, is mere amusement and flattery, no other than human invention, as the doctrine of human merit is in every shape and degree; the security of mind which prevails with many under these ignorant conceits, is not the peace of God, but contrary to his revealed will, which declares him to be reconciled to sinners only in and thro' Christ; the peace we are treating of, and which is experienced by believers, is begotten in the soul through the word of peace and reconciliation, set home with power on the heart;

heart; which being opened to embrace the salvation revealed through a crucified *Jesus* (whose merit is the sole cause of our acceptance with God) is filled with peace and consolation; and it is by the promises of the Gospel, under the same gracious influences, that the mind of the Christian is nourished, this peace promoted and maintained, and he is preserved from being offended. Thus it is stiled *the peace of God*, as it is the fruit of the divine spirit in the soul, is bestowed by, and comes from God the Father as a free gift, and is founded on the divine word; doubtless such a peace must be true, solid, great, and everlasting; and no wonder then, that, thro' the strength of such grace, the believer is carried thro' all difficulties and oppositions; but who can sufficiently comprehend or set forth this peace of God in the heart of the Christian? one of its admirable qualities is, *it passeth all understanding*; which leads me to the consideration of the second thing proposed, *viz.*

Secondly, To observe in what respects this peace may be said to *pass understanding*. It is a wonderful work of grace in the heart, considered in its implantation, increase and perfection: however when it is said to exceed understanding, we are not to conceive this is so unintelligible a thing, as that the Christian is not acquainted with, or sensible of it; it may be apprehended, though it cannot be thoroughly comprehended; could not the soul, invested with this peace of God, feel and know

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know it, so as to be certain of her being in the possession of it, it could have no actual, sensible impression on the mind; it could not yield consolation, courage, or joy, or be, in any wise, influential to the believer's perseverance: the Christian knows when his heart is exercised with this peace; he then finds himself filled with serenity, confidence and delight, and can tell over many particular instances in which his love to God, his triumph over his spiritual enemies, and his holy expectation of entering into perfect peace (when he is taken out of a world of sin and temptation) have been made to appear, with many other known effects of this peace prevailing in the mind, yet, in several respects, it may be said to pass understanding.

(1) It is a peace not to be attained or imparted by the wisdom and skill of the greatest men; as no man can naturally exercise such a reliance on God, such a resolution against sin, and such a joy in the Lord *Jesus Christ*, as is exhorted to in the context; so no one can invest himself with the peaceable fruits and effects of it: the believer himself has no cause of boasting in his wisdom and power, when he enjoys this peace in consequence of his diligence; for, to say nothing of his obligations to divine grace assisting him in such exercises, it is not for the sake of what he is found in the practice of that he is thus favoured, as though it were due to him upon that

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account, since it is imparted through a promise of free grace : there is a secret and powerful operation of divine grace necessarily exerted to produce this peace in the soul ; which no modest, well understanding person, would pretend to be his due, for the sake of his exercising grace, or the best duties he performs. This peace cannot be acquired by any, under the greatest advantages ; it is, as before observed, the fruit of the holy spirit ; now what is the work of the spirit of God cannot be compassed by the creature. It seems unworthy of God to suppose he exerts his extraordinary influences for the production of that in his creatures, which they themselves, in the ordinary course of nature, and by virtue of that power they are already possess'd of, are capable of producing ; this is at least a needless exertion of his almighty and wonderful power, the admitting of which is a thought that must needs be abhorred by such who love God, and have a due reverence of his glorious perfections.

This peace of conscience, arising from a view of the holiness and justice of God, reconciled in the pardon of sin, was what none of the wisest of the heathens could ever attain to themselves, or afford others ; for they never could strike out a scheme in which these perfections harmonized with mercy to rebel-creatures, who had once contracted guilt, and broke the righteous law
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their wise and good creator had made them under.

And as for those who enjoy that revelation, which alone, and plainly points out how mercy and truth meet together in the salvation of a sinner, they cannot, of themselves, embrace this declaration of grace, so as to believe it, rely upon and apply it, and thereby enjoy this peace: it is not reading of, or reasoning upon the scriptures of truth, unless God is pleased to open the heart, will impart this to a man's soul: moral suasion will never produce this, though managed by the ablest instrument, and attempted on the most lovely natural man: the holiest man upon earth, distinguished with the greatest talents, cannot, with all his pains and labour, convey the least dram of this peace to the soul, after whose salvation he longs: in short, it may be well said to *pass all understanding*, since persons of the finest understandings, and quickest capacities, are as far off from bestowing or receiving it as the weakest and dullest. It is not to be acquired by the labour, pains, and skill of the creature; no man can get it for himself, or give it to another.

(2) It may be stiled, a *peace which passeth all understanding*, as it cannot be sufficiently express'd by those who have really experienced it: the divine life, and this branch of it begun and carried on in the soul, is a mystery to the happy

subject: he is sensible of it, and finds his heart exercised with it: he can represent some of its noble effects to the understandings of such who have been enlightened, and tasted of the same grace, as before observ'd: but such are the operations of the spirit on the soul of man, and those communications of grace from Christ, whereby Christians persevere, that they cannot thoroughly comprehend, much less clearly describe the manner of their workings; hence the spirit's work is set forth by the wind, for its imperceptible and wonderful, as well as free and sovereign influences; nor can the Christian say what joy and peace he feels in his mind, when, through the power of the holy Ghost, he exercises strong faith on what Christ has purchased, agreeable to the eternal settlement of peace, for his security and everlasting happiness; and when, under the sealing witness of that divine Comforter, they abound in hope of the glorious inheritance among the Saints in light; the Christian in such a frame may say to others, *come, taste and see* how good the Lord is; but how much sweetness, joy and pleasure he finds is not easily express'd; nor indeed is it possible fully to represent it: the believer cannot sufficiently set forth the consolation and delight he experiences when grace and peace are communicated to his soul, and this promise is fulfilled.

(3) This

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(3) This peace passes the understanding of the most subtil of the believer's enemies, so that none of them can take it away; the world often intrudes upon, and interrupts the Christian in the sensible enjoyment of it, and the cares and pleasures of this life, as they betray the mind into an unbelieving frame; whatever interrupts the actings of faith, by the exercise of which this peace diffuses itself through the *heart and mind*, must proportionably deprive the believer of the joy with which the flowings of that peace is attended; but the world shall not prevail so far as utterly to deprive him of peace: the merits of Christ are infinite, and the seed of grace is incorruptible; therefore faith will exert itself again, overcome the world, and recover peace in the believer's heart. Satan, the common and unwearied adversary of our souls, is a creature of great understanding, and possess'd of noble natural powers; his devices are not a few, but all his subtil contrivances come short, and will eternally fail of taking this peace utterly away: he may endeavour, indeed, to make the Christian yield up all his hopes, and thereby bring him into despair; but it shall be to no purpose: the wisdom of him that has the keeping of his mind, is greater than the subtilty of him that seeks after the destruction of his peace: he may be permitted to interrupt the exercise of grace, but can never counterwork the spirit's operations in the

soul; the wit of our spiritual enemies will fail them in this case; their councils shall always be turned into foolishness, God will maintain his work on his children, it shall be *built up for ever*. This peace was laid in the heart by the wisdom of God, nor shall any creature, by any artifice or contrivance, nor the policy of hell itself, frustrate or bring it to nought.

(4) *Lastly*, This certainly passes the understanding of such who are utter strangers to it; such cannot conceive the noble effects it has on the soul; if the believer himself cannot fully comprehend it, so as to be able to give a sufficient and exact account of it, how much less must it be in the power of one that never felt its influence to understand it? the world cannot give this peace, nor can they that are wholly of the world conceive aright of this mystery in the renewed soul; a carnal man has no true apprehension of the joy, consolation, thankfulness and delight which are found in the mind of the Christian, when by faith he receives the atonement, and, from a communication of life and strength from Christ, is enabled to exercise himself as described in the context, especially as he is encouraged by such gracious assurances and promises as these under consideration. A stranger intermeddles not with these things. Thus we see, that this peace, wrought and maintained by the divine spirit in the soul of the believer, given from God the Father, and
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Christ, and nourish'd by divine promises, surpasses all understanding: no wisdom or understanding of the creature, can produce it. The Christian himself is not able fully to set it forth; the subtlest of our enemies cannot destroy it; and it is what brings forth such glorious effects in the mind, as cannot be conceived of by those who are utter strangers to the experience of it. This would bring us to the third and last thing proposed, *viz.* To shew how this peace operates to keep the mind, and influence the believer to perseverance. But before I enter on that, permit me to make one observation, with which I shall close this chapter, *viz.* How unreasonable is it for persons to reject doctrines that are plainly revealed, because they are mysterious in their nature, mode of existence and operation? We have been led to take notice of the wonderful discovery of divine love and grace, in that peace God has made for his people, though sinful rebels, that had no desire after the knowledge of him, after they had thus revolted from him; this I say we have taken notice of in the foregoing chapter, as what appears to pass all understanding; we have now consider'd the peace of God in a subjective sense; this appears upon examination to be a wonderful work of divine grace in the soul, exceeding the capacity of any to attain or comprehend sufficiently, no not the devil himself, so as to know how to undermine,

or counter-work it: seeing this is the case, how unreasonable is it to be offended at any revealed truth, because it is a mystery? this is the way to reject all revelation; not only the profound doctrine of the trinity, the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and such like particular doctrines, that are more commonly cavilled against; but the whole plan of salvation; God's executing his gracious and eternal purpose, in delivering up to justice and taking a price of reconciliation at the hands of his Son, as surety of his people, or his sending down his Spirit to begin, carry on, and perfect a work of grace in the soul; all this is a mystery from first to last. No peace with God, or peace from God, (for one, or both, the Apostle means by the peace of God) if we have nothing to do with mysteries; for this peace of God, in either sense, you see *passeth all understanding*. Such who cry out against mysteries, may, in my humble opinion, as well cry out against revelation itself, and the scheme of salvation therein laid open through a crucified Redeemer, together with the work of grace and peace, wrought by the divine spirit in the heart of a believer; indeed the doctrines some men teach, who are for exploding mysteries, are little else, if any thing short of it.

However, not to digress too far, Christian, you may see from what has been already shewn, that they who would deprive us of mysteries,
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would deprive us of justification and sanctification, for they are both mysteries; this is to leave us no Gospel, this is to leave us without comfort under a sense of sin, and to expose our hearts to slavish fear, which must issue in despair at last. But, blessed be God, though we cannot comprehend the heighths or depths of God's love and grace, and that mercy and peace that flow through a Mediator, we can believe and feel the effects thereof, to our unspeakable joy and consolation, knowing it will be effectual to our eternal salvation.

C H A P. IV.

Shewing how this peace operates for the preservation of the believer's mind, and influences him to perseverance.

WE proceed now to shew how this peace operates for the preservation of the believer's mind, and influences him to perseverance. This point of experience may be very difficult to represent; but I shall attempt something towards it, in briefly touching on the three following particulars.

(1) As it draws forth the affections to God, in this way it becomes influential to the destruction of those lusts that naturally wound, and, if
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left to take their course, will, in the end, cause a final apostacy from God. If we consider how this is produced in the soul, we shall find its natural effects must necessarily be attracting our desires after, and delight in God, and the engagement of our affections to him: this peace is begotten through the manifestation and witness of the spirit, with respect to that peace made with God through our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and our interest in it, which cannot fail of being attended with a discovery of God's love to our souls, as demonstrated in the gift of his son, thro' whom we see ourselves thus accepted, and free from condemnation; love naturally begets love, this observation holds good in the spiritual subject now under consideration. The soul cannot be possess'd of, or exercised with this peace of God without a view of its peace with God through the blood of Christ; and this can never be stedfastly beheld without a prospect of God's love to the soul, which will unavoidably draw out our affections towards him; the truth of this, I believe, will be questioned by none who have experienced their hearts exercised with this peace; but there wants not for scriptural evidence to the fact, see *Romans v.* and the beginning. The Apostle is there speaking of that tranquility, courage, and glory, which are felt in believers hearts, in the prospect of their justification and peace with God, through *Jesus Christ*; and says verse 5. *The love of*

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of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost; that spirit which revealed this method of reconciliation with power to their consciences, and testified their interest in this peace, led them also to see the love of God to their souls, as the source and moving cause of such a way of salvation; and accordingly they cry out with joy and admiration, God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; [verse 8.] This manifestation of God's love to us, in sending forth his only begotten Son, that we might live through him, will engage the heart to God, as the Apostle John represents it, [1 Epistle, iv. 9, 10.] In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live thro' him: herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. So [verses 16, 17, and 18.] in the same chapter, he asserts the effect of this discovery on his own soul, and the souls of others, saying, And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us; God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him: herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment: he that feareth is not made perfect in love. He then adds verse 19. we love him, because he first loved us. Every one knows

knows how cementing love is, and how effectually it prevents (where it exists and operates) a separation from its object: this peace, therefore, as it yields a prospect of, and is the effect of God's love, so it naturally produces love to God on reflection, and thereby becomes influential to preserve the heart from apostacy from God.

Under this head we might take notice, that love to God strengthens the habit, and facilitates the exercise of faith; carnal and vile affections harden us in unbelief: men, in their natural state, believe not in God, because they have no love to God; hence our Lord reproving the *Jews* for incredulity, tells them, (*John v. 42.*) *But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you*; this enmity is slain where true faith is implanted; where there is love to God, the heart will yield to, and rest upon God; the greater love is, the stronger faith will be; whatever promotes the former (as this peace exercised in the soul does) must increase the latter, and, consequently, be subservient to the believer's preservation and perseverance: when we consider what the scripture declares, concerning the use of faith in this article of perseverance, (for it is said, we are kept by the power of God *through faith*, which works by love) *unto salvation*; *i. e.* in this way we are secured through all dangers and temptations from within or without, till we arrive safe to glory:
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hence multitudes of Saints, who underwent sore trials, are said, through *faith* and *patience*, to be *inheriting the promises*. [1 Peter i. 5. Gal. v. 6. and Hebrews vi. 12 compared.]

In a word, this peace of God is a solace of soul, in a reflection on our happy state, through the undertakings of Christ, as the fruit of God's everlasting love to us; this wondrous grace, as it is free, distinguishing, and fruitful of every thing the Christian can really want, or reasonably desire, fills his heart with the utmost satisfaction and delight, and causes it to flow freely towards God, and thereby secures it from defection: while the heart is delighting itself in its justification through the righteousness of Christ, in consequence of God's special love, this heart must be exercised with love to God; and, where this truly prevails, neither the world, sin, nor the devil, can, or shall ever, be able to draw the soul from God, or cause it to apostatize.

(2) This peace influences to perseverance, as it includes an *insurance* of a supply of every necessary good, and a successful issue of every providence: it casts out tormenting fears and anxieties, as we have seen, which betray persons into unbelief: many give out, faint and fail for want of believing *to see the goodness of God in the land of the living*; a little matter will weary the soul that is destitute of this peace; such an one will soon fall into despair and apostatize: but where the spirit
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witnesses to the heart its state of reconciliation, and interest in the divine favour, such a person is assured that he shall want for nothing necessary; that a blessing shall certainly attend him under every circumstance, which is a great encouragement and help to perseverance: this peace composes the soul, enables it to keep a steady eye of faith on God's covenant, and the precious promises that appertain unto it: hence, it faints not under the heaviest burthens, nor fears ruin and destruction in the darkest valley: his heart does not fear, trusting in the Lord, he is saying, as [*Psalm xxvii. 1. 5.*] *The Lord is my light, and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? for in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me upon a rock.* Where the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, the person knows God will supply all his lack; as it can never change, so it can never fail of yielding what its object really wants, or can reasonably expect; where this peace is arising from a view of our interest in Christ as the gift of God, with a share in redemption, and all spiritual blessings through him, we are ready to rejoice, and under the influence of the divine spirit, to reason after this manner; has he loved me with an everlasting love? has he given me his Son, *and shall he not with him, freely give me all things?* The fruit of this

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this is express'd, [*Rom. viii.*] *We know that all things work together for good*; why? because they were enabled to see and believe, that God had, in love, given his Son, who, having attoned for the guilt of sin, had thereby infallibly and eternally secured all those who had trusted in him from condemnation; hence, they persevered through all difficulties, and, though they were killed all the day long, underwent the most cruciating sorrows; *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us*; and being persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord; verses 37, 38, 39. Thus they fainted not, this peace of God was in their hearts, and, therefore, they were persuaded, that nothing necessary to their everlasting happiness should be wanting.

(3) It operates to preserve the believer, as it raises a certain expectation of the inheritance provided: this peace, wrought and maintained in the soul, excites the grace of hope, through the exercise of which we are saved from apostacy: this is a clear case from *Rom. xv. 13.* where the Apostle prays for an increase of the peace we are speaking of, to this end, *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye*
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may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. If this peace flows from a certain prospect of what Christ has done, in making peace for us by the blood of his cross, and purchasing eternal glory for us, it must needs, in proportion to the degree of it, raise our expectation of enjoying the fruit of his labour; this hope is effectual to secure from apostacy; for it is not like human hope, uncertain and dubious, but founded on the immutability of the divine council which God has made known, that the heirs of salvation might have *strong consolation*, which is a phrase I apprehend expressive of that peace we are treating of; and I think 'tis easy to see that the more this strong consolation, or peace of God, abounds in our hearts, the more vigorous and active this grace of hope is, through the exercise of which we persevere: some degree of true hope is necessary to this peace of God, but when this peace flows, gains the ascendant, and rules in the heart of the believer, it becomes the occasion of advancing him to *the full assurance of hope to the end*: hope is increased and exercised so as to keep the Christian pressing forward towards the prize, under the influence of divine peace, with which the soul is filled. In conformity to which experimental truth, in the foremention'd vth of *Romans*, the Apostle, after speaking of this holy confidence and peace, express'd, as I apprehend, by their having access into grace, and standing therein,
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he adds, *and rejoice in hope of the glory of God:* this, like an helmet, keeps off the influence of Satan's darts. Whom God justifies, he will glorify. The believer is kept from fainting under the forest afflictions, and looks upon his trials as *light and momentary*, because *working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*: it strengthens the heart and mind of a Christian, to consider *God will bruise Satan under his feet shortly*; that he shall, when he has overcome, be admitted into the temple of God above, and, according to his Redeemer's promise, sit with him on his throne. Thus this peace operates for the believer's preservation, as it promotes love to God, patience, confidence, and a joyful hope in the soul which is exercised with it: these graces enable the true Christian to go on believing *to the salvation of the soul*.

The consolatory influences of the blessed spirit communicated to the child of God, in waiting upon him, according to this, and such like gracious promises, preserves him from that disappointment, sorrow, distraction, and despair, which are the consequences of being left to ourselves, under the slavery of tormenting fears, which wound the heart through carking cares; cares that flow from worldly affections, and propagate presumption and unbelief, and fatally destroy the soul, where the grace of God prevents not. The peace of conscience that arises through a prospect

of our interest in Christ, and all the blessings that descend through his merit and undertakings, shall keep our hearts and minds, by spiritualizing our affections, raising them to God and heavenly objects, insuring us of real prosperity under every circumstance, and exciting our hopes of entering into that peace and rest, *that remain for the people of God.* In this way, *this peace of God which passeth all understanding* becomes influential to prevent our apostacy from God, or to *keep our hearts and minds through* Christ Jesus; by the means of this holy and spiritual frame, produced through this peace ruling in our hearts, present things are but little valued, our minds are fortified against Satan's temptations, and our hope, like an anchor, will effectually keep us from sinking or being lost. But, from this assurance of the Apostle's to animate these Christians to the exercise of those duties and graces he presses in the preceding verses, several weighty things may be deduced, as therein implied; the representation of which, with a few hints of improvement, will be the subject of some other chapters.

C H A P. V.

Containing an enlargement upon several observations deducible from this assurance of the Apostle, as an encouragement for these Christians to be found in the practice of the duties exhorted to.

WE have seen that the security and preservation of the soul, through all the snares, temptations, and difficulties of the present state, is promised to encourage the believer in those spiritual exercises exhorted to, such as rejoicing in the Lord, shining in all the duties of a Christian life, (in the expectation of Christ's appearance) and resting our case by faith in daily and constant addresses to the throne of grace. How the peace of God imparted operates to the accomplishment of this promise has been briefly hinted: this promise of perseverance in the manner described, and for the end proposed, implies several things not unworthy of notice, which we shall now proceed to set before the reader.

First, It implies, that the great object of our spiritual enemies attack, is the soul, the *heart and mind*; this is the valuable jewel opposed, and aimed at, on the preservation of which our happiness depends; in all the attempts of Satan he labours to darken, distress, and ruin the soul. In

his first onset upon our parents in the garden of *Eden*, while innocent, and in perfect rectitude, his aim was to deface the image of God in the soul of man, in which he fatally succeeded, (as appears from the deformity of their natural descendants) when he prevailed upon them to sin against their rightful Sovereign and good Creator. The vitiosity of our natures, in a natural state, sadly witnesses how much Satan obtained in this view by his first temptation.

Having thus introduced a depravity of nature, through which our hearts are enslaved and naturally exposed to misery, his constant endeavours are to hold us in this dreadful condition, that his malice may be indulged in tormenting us, and that we at length may be cast into that everlasting punishment prepared for him and his Angels; and where a work of divine grace is begun, he would prevent the continuance or increase of it, if it were possible; for the restoration of our souls to the divine image, in order to their eternal welfare, is what he levels all his stratagems against. The soul is the object of his hatred and enmity, the happiness of which he annoys, and is unweariedly endeavouring to prevent or destroy.

The like may be said of indwelling sin; the lusts of the flesh, as they war in our members, they war against the soul; their continual aim is to deceive, in order to devour; they each strive
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for the mastery, and would have dominion over the mind, and bring all the faculties of the soul in subjection to them: these aim at the heart, and if this can be obtained, either under, or destitute of a form of godliness, they are satisfied: they seek for the soul, and in some instances are gratified. Some persons though, under a profession of religion, yet are the *servants of sin*, their hearts and minds are in the hands of these spiritual enemies, viz. their lusts; hypocrites, who draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, have their hearts far from him; their judgments are yet depraved, their understandings dark, their wills and affections vain and sensual: under a shew of godliness, persons may flatter themselves with liberty, while they are in bondage to corruption; hence every truly wise and gracious soul, who would not deceive himself or others, is frequently searching his heart, knowing the importance of having it right with God, particularly after any remarkable conflict with sin: when believers have been wrestling with their lusts, chased, wounded, foiled, and taken prisoners as it were, dragged into a sinful exercise, or overtaken with some fault, they find themselves entangled, their consciences wounded, and their spirits almost exhausted; after the heat of the engagement is over, the Christian naturally reflects on his heart, searches if there be any mortal blow given,

whether he has voluntarily yielded to sin or the devil, indeed, he has been guilty of actual sin which he is ashamed of and mourns over; but upon examination of what has passed, he is ready to ask himself, have I not been deceived? has it not been against my deliberate choice and will? though I am conscious of some sort of wilful sin, yet how is it now the hurry of the temptation is over? sure I hate what I did, and from the bottom of my soul have so great an esteem for God's testimonies, and such delight in his law, that I could rejoice to be delivered from all inclination to, or occasion of sinning. When the mind is composed, after the buffetings of lust, then to know, on reflection, that there have been strivings of the spirit against the flesh, and to find there is a real anger and indignation against those lusts that have enticed us mingled with our sorrow for sin, this is a joyful testimony in the conscience of a believer; without some degree of which, he would faint under a sense of his folly. Thus it was with the Apostle, when he had been tossed up and down with the corruptions of his heart, and found so much weakness and defilement, and underwent those trials in which he seemed to be overcome, he had some jealousy of his mind, but upon reflection he rejoiced in this, that he found a principle of hatred against what he did contrary to the law of God; that he was captivated either through fraud, or forced against his inclinations

clinations, and with his *mind served the law of God*, though with *the flesh he had served the law of sin*. There is a great difference, Christian; between serving the law of sin under such constraints, and being a servant of sin; 'tis the latter our spiritual enemies aim at. The Apostle therefore was comforted on the issue of his conflict, that his *heart* was not in the defection.

Remember, Christian, whatever temptation befalls you from the adversary, his view is to wound your heart, to destroy the honour, peace, glory and happiness of your soul: Satan may solicit, and prevail to deprive you of some outward enjoyment; and have leave, as in the case of *Job*, to see you exercised with one sore affliction after another; but his design is, as in that instance, to make you let go your integrity, and fly in the face of God to your destruction. If you are tempted to neglect a duty, or allow yourself in a known sin, it is not so much your omission of that duty, or the commission of that sin, but your apostacy from God, that gratifies and answers the end of the tempter: you may perform a thousand external duties, if your hearts are not right with God, and he is satisfied; and if you are inadvertently drawn into a commission of ever so many sins, and yet retain in your hearts a principle of hatred to those sins, and love to God, which will certainly discover itself at length in true repentance, the devil loses his aim; his de-

sign is your rebellion against God, that, so contracting guilt on your conscience, you may loose your peace and comfort ; and in casting away your confidence, you may, at last, be brought into condemnation, and fall into the like horror and despair, and be bound over to the same eternal damnation with himself: it is thus to hunt your souls into everlasting sorrow and ruin, he labours after, this is his ultimate design in his temptations : blessed be God, greater is he that is for the believer, than he, or all they, who are against him: happy those, who being in *Christ Jesus*, are made partakers of this peace, which, like a shield, will preserve them from the influence of Satan's fiery darts, and baffle all the designs of such who seek their ruin. This peace *shall keep their hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.*

Secondly, This assurance or promise for the end proposed, implies, that a secret doubt, concerning the certainty of perseverance, exposes the believer to anxious cares : the Apostle's subjoining this assurance, in order to encourage the laying aside these hurtful cares, points out to us, that some hesitation concerning this matter mingles itself with undue thoughts about the things of this world. The fears of not attaining to what we desire and think necessary for us, are natural concomitants of such cares, let the object of our pursuit be what it will ; the uncertainty of all
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sublunary things renders us liable to fears about arriving to the possession of any thing dear to us in life, if at any the least distance from us ; and there are so many hazards respecting what we have in hand, that the uncertainty of their continuance subjects us to fears of loosing the same ; hence cares perpetually enslave us, unless we are in some measure weaned from terrestrial things, and enabled to live on the promise and providence of God.

Nothing is more common, than for Satan to stir up doubts concerning our perseverance ; nor perhaps is there any thing more universally the experience of believers, than some time or other to feel a secret fear of this kind, especially when in the dark ; and no thought more distracts or fills the mind of the Christian with piercing cares. When we are hurried into a forgetfulness where our security lies, we are presently overtaken with groundless fears, and fall into carnal frames ; this distresses the mind, and under these circumstances we are jealous of every dark providence, that it makes against us ; in such a frame we are apt to think, unless we can attain this, or that, or the other good, we shall be overcome ; if we miss of some particular thing, we foolishly imagine necessary for us, that then we shall not be able to stand, or if such a calamity overtakes us, that this will be our ruin : thus we are bewild'ed in our wanderings from God ; are apt to
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consult our own carnal reason, rather than his precious promises and sacred oracles; we follow the imagination of our own hearts, and naturally meet with disappointment and sorrow.

In proportion to our uncertainty of an infallible security in the favour, and by the grace of God, is our danger of being overtaken with these cares, that are so hurtful to our peace, and that naturally tend to the ruin of our souls; there is no thoroughly casting away all our sinful care, without a realizing prospect, by faith, of the care Christ has for us, through whom there is a certainty of obtaining grace sufficient to prevent our utter ruin and destruction; nothing short of this will produce that peace which, in proportion to its prevalency, effectually guards the mind from anxieties, and which being once implanted in the heart shall not fail of keeping the soul from apostatizing from God, according to this sweet and comfortable promise.

Thirdly, It appears from this method of stirring up these, and, through them, all Christians to such a frame and conduct as become Saints, that an assurance of perseverance by the power and grace of God, is a great encouragement to the renewed soul, to the diligent exercise of grace, and discharge of duty: this promise you see was given to animate these Christians to prayer, holiness, constant acts of faith, confiding and rejoicing in the Lord *Jesus Christ*.

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Those who do not relish the doctrine of the Saints final perseverance, misrepresent and reproach it with having a tendency to licentiousness, and to make persons careless and loose in their conduct: if, say they, persons have got an opinion that they are the children of God, they will naturally indulge themselves in these iniquities which they are sure cannot hinder their final perseverance, particularly such sins (and some of them are very gross) which Saints, on record, are reported to have fallen into: a noted * writer who professedly declares against this glorious doctrine of grace, has words to this effect: but the unreasonableness of this objection has been plainly shewn again and again by many abler hands than mine; who have clearly proved it cannot, in the nature of things, have any such tendency on a soul that truly fears God; however, I could not well avoid taking some notice hereof, considering what is before us. If this were really the case, that an assurance of preservation would naturally promote carelessness and the indulgence of sin, this promise was very unskilfully subjoined by our inspired author, after the exhortations he had given forth; he is evidently concerned that they should stand fast in the Lord, rejoice in him alone, exercise and discover moderation, be instant in prayer; these things every one must know

* Whitby, p. 487. Ed. 2. 466,

are utterly inconsistent with the indulgence of sin; it is easy to see that holiness in life, and diligence in duty, are included in the verses immediately preceding this promise, which is obviously urged, to excite a regard to the things recommended in them: the design of the Apostle in delivering this assurance of being kept, discovers the little foundation there is for asserting, that the doctrine of the Saints perseverance leads to carelessness: if he is allowed to be a skilful workman, this can never be the case; and when we consider, as we are fully persuaded, that this is written under the inspiration of the unerring spirit of God, the groundlessness of such a notion or consequence, charged on this doctrine, is beyond all doubt. If there be any argument in this verse, as it stands related to what goes before, it must (I think) run thus, *viz.* The peace of God, that shall be communicated and imparted from time to time, shall be sufficient infallibly to preserve you, and shall certainly keep your hearts and minds: therefore fear not, be courageous, and constant at the throne of grace, committing your cause, and making known your request to God: let your moderation be conspicuous to every one, and rejoice in the Lord, being steadfast in your profession, and the duties of it, whatever difficulties lie in the way. Thus it would never suit the purpose of the Apostle, who was so concerned they should be steady, holy, and diligent

gent in their profession, to mention a promise of this kind, if a certainty of perseverance, in its own nature, had a tendency to slacken their diligence, and tempt them to licentiousness.

This assurance is given in view of the mercy of God in *Christ Jesus*, and the covenant made with him for his chosen, in which covenant it is plain, the final perseverance of those who are partakers of divine grace is secured; for this is my covenant, saith the Lord, *I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;* [Jeremiah xxxii. 40.] hence every true believer is confident, as is declared in the 6th verse of the first chapter of this Epistle, *that he who hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Christ.* This is a doctrine according to godliness, for it tends to encourage believers to exercise a temper and conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ.

Men of corrupt minds, and such who know nothing of the power of Godliness, may abuse, and turn the grace of God into wantonness; but whatever ill use carnal persons, either in, or out of a profession, may make of such an assurance, an enlightened and sanctified mind must be encouraged to holiness and duty, when, notwithstanding his own weakness, and the temptations that await him, he is certain his endeavours shall not be in vain.

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It may also be observed, that such a promise must necessarily be supposed to be made to those who are concerned about their perseverance; being fully persuaded, without it, they are undone for ever; for he hath said, he that *draweth back my soul, shall have no pleasure in*: now it is unreasonable to suggest, that a soul, convinced of the evil nature of sin, and sincerely desirous of attaining eternal life, should indulge himself in all manner of sin, and willfully act as though he was determined not to persevere; from this very consideration, that God has assured him, in the exercise of grace and discharge of duty, he *shall never fall*. He that is persuaded that he is a child of God, is assured that he shall be preserved and brought to the glory of God's children, for, if *children, then heirs*, and the heirs of promise have this strong consolation from the immutability of the divine council, which nothing can frustrate. [*Romans* viii. 17. compared with *Hebrews* vi. 17, 18.] This may also be gathered from 1 *John* iii. 1. yet he that hath this hope (in which there is a certainty of being like Christ when he appears, and consequently of final perseverance) *purifieth himself as he is pure*; verse 3. of the same chapter. *Peter* (1 *Epistle* i. 5.) assures them to whom he wrote, that they who are begotten unto a lively hope, are *kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation*; yet he infers, therefore, from that very consideration, that they

they should gird up the loins of their minds, &c. *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* In a word, nothing can be more natural, if a person is rightly and sincerely disposed by the grace of God, than to take encouragement to duty, from such absolute promises of perseverance. If there be a real desire of attaining the end, an assurance or certainty of attaining it, in the use of means, will undoubtedly quicken in the use of such means as are appointed to that end: the surer a believer is of success and victory, the more active and courageous will he be through all conflicts, whatever difficulties may be in the way. Thus the Apostle was animated, *I run, says he, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.* [1 Cor. ix. 26.] Upon the whole, I think it is very irrational, and argues a bad spirit, to urge so unnatural a consequence from so glorious and comfortable a doctrine; a doctrine abundantly testified to in revelation, and containing in it what is so expressly promised in the covenant of grace; and such do very much differ from the Apostle in the instance before us, that reflect on it as licentious, since he holds forth the

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promise of it, to enliven them in a course of holiness and duty.

C H A P. VI.

A fourth observation implied in the Apostle's assurance, with some reflections on the whole.

WE proceed to the fourth and last observation implied in the promise, viz. that the believer, after all his care and diligence, is not his own preserver: the preservation of the Christian you see is not to be ascrib'd to himself, but to the grace of God; it is not said your prayers, your diligence in duty, your repeated acts of faith on the Lord *Jesus Christ*, rejoicing in him, as him in whom you have righteousness and strength, but *the peace of God shall keep your hearts*. “The wonderful efficacious influence
“of divine grace on the soul, raising your af-
“fections to heaven, shewing you the security
“you have by divine grace through every
“providential change, and *your certain enjoyment*
“of eternal life, this shall keep your hearts, &c.” The believer is actively concerned, as assisted by the spirit of God; but his security lies not in himself, his salvation is ascribed to the inhabitation, influence and operation of God's spirit in
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the heart, through whose aids the Christian mortifies corruption, withstands temptation, discharges duty, and the fruit of which is this peace in the soul, whereby the heart is thus guarded and preserved: answerable to this, is chapter ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* It is thro' faith, but yet by the power of God, that we are kept unto salvation. [1 Peter i. 5.] The Spirit's operations are therefore provided for, and promised in the covenant of grace; and bestowed, in effectual calling, on every one predestinated to the adoption of children in *Jesus Christ*, to help and guide them through every snare and difficulty; and this spirit never shall depart from them; hence therefore they persevere to everlasting life.

There is a great difference between our holding out to the end, and laying hold of the prize, *in* keeping God's commands, and *for* keeping them: the former is true, and renders the Christian's diligence, as the appointed means, of importance; for the Apostle shews [2 Peter i.] it is through the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty, professors must expect to persevere, and indeed assures them, *if they do these things they shall never fall*; verse 10. The latter is not true; for there is no proportion between the best of our frames and good works, (though abundantly

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dantly discover'd through a long continuance in the present state) and one moment's enjoyment of the happiness of the beatific vision; or that glory which the believer rejoices in the hope of, when, by faith, he receives *the attonement*; for *when we have done all things commanded us, we are unprofitable servants* in this respect: [Luke xvii. 10.] As on the one hand we must take heed not to be slothful, so on the other we must always remember by whose strength we have been capable of exercising diligence, and through whose power we are maintained and preserved through all the conflicts we meet with: there is no room for pride in him that is preserved from ruin and destruction, notwithstanding all his care and diligence; his salvation from first to last is to be ascribed to the power and grace of God. We see then, that this promise of having the soul undoubtedly secured through the peace of God operating in the heart, for the encouragement of these Christians to be steadfast, holy, and fruitful in their profession, implies, that the ruin of the soul is the ultimate view and aim of Satan, in all his attacks and temptations; that a secret doubt, concerning certain perseverance, exposes the believer to anxious cares; that an assurance of being preserved, by the power and grace of God, is a great encourager of the renewed person to holiness and duty; and, in fine, that the preservation of the believer is to be ascribed

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cribed to his gracious influences, who *works all our works in us*, as well as *for us*. I shall now close with a few reflections.

First, We learn the danger of a thoughtless, carnal sinner, who has no concern about the preservation of his heart: our hearts are the objects of the devil's pursuit, and naturally exposed to ruin and misery; what must become of such who have no care about their minds, and are strangers to that peace of God which alone can effectually preserve them? surely, if grace prevent not, by a change of such persons, their destruction is unavoidable; Satan cannot fail of obtaining his cruel designs upon such. Sinner, if this enemy meets with no opposition, he will certainly take possession; in how defenceless a state are those who are destitute of the grace of God (as all such are who have no concern about the salvation of their souls) they are in danger every moment of falling into despair and hell. It is well the Lion of the infernal pit is conquered, limited and restrained, or he would devour every soul in an instant; the longer persons lie in an unconverted state, the more their hearts are hardened and blinded; lust is more predominant, the mind grows worse and worse, and the faster this strong man arm'd binds the spirit; for where there is no fear of God, consequently the heart is void of this sacred shield; there is no security, except where God, according to his secret purpose, limits the rage

of that apostate spirit: thoughtless sinners are *led captive by Satan at his will*; in this condition, if removed into an eternal state, how deplorable is their case! they can only be vessels fitted for destruction, and must expect to dwell with devouring flames, and lie down in everlasting burnings.

The importance of having the heart and mind kept from defection, even where a good work is begun, (because sin remains and Satan ranges) shews the forlorn, exposed, and dangerous condition of a graceless sinner, who has no watch or guard over his heart: melancholly is it to consider what multitudes are to be ranked among this number, who devise and contrive night and day, how to possess, enjoy, and keep things that relate to the body, but have no thought about their souls. They are not the least concerned how their minds shall be kept from the snare of the devil, and safe in a future state. It is to be feared many never seriously think about their souls, the devil, or a future state, but are ignorant of the nature and inexpressible worth of their own spirits, the malice and design of Satan, and the dismal consequences of entering an eternal state, without being prepared for it, by a deliverance from the power of this prince of darkness: they, like the worldling in the Gospel (caring after the well disposing and easy enjoyment of earthly things) forget
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they have souls to be saved, whose destruction is hunted after, and for which they must become accountable in a very short time. O! that careless stupid sinners were awakened to consider their latter end, the things that are necessary to their peace, before it be too late! that they beheld the enemy who is at their heels, the snares at their feet, and the gulph of perdition on the precipice of which their heedless steps are taken, that they might see how irrational and senseless a thing it is, to lay out all their time and thoughts, under any pretence, to the neglect of their souls. He that knows any thing aright, knows this is the one thing needful: enquire therefore, Reader, what you have to depend upon for the keeping your soul, which is spiritual and immortal; remember your soul is capable of receiving the impressions of God's wrath or love, capable of the highest everlasting joys, or the deepest eternal misery.

Secondly, We see the absolute necessity of an interest in the Lord *Jesus Christ*, through whom alone there is peace with God, or peace from God, it is all through *Christ Jesus*: there is no peace, and consequently no safety out of Christ; ruin and destruction will be the inevitable portion of Christless sinners: our hearts and minds can be kept alone by that grace which is purchased and bestowed by Christ; all reconciliation, peace, and security flow through his

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merits,

merits, intercession, and the operations of his spirit; without an interest in Christ, our souls therefore must be lost instead of kept, ruined instead of saved; without this, we are under a curse, liable to the wrath of God; nor is there any thing else can skreen us in the day of his vengeance, for his anger will smother against all the workers of iniquity: out of Christ, the God with whom we have to do is a *consuming fire*; God has exalted him, through the riches of his grace, for the encouragement of all sensible sinners; but there is no other name given under heaven, whereby a man can be saved. The peace of such who are strangers to Christ, and an interest in him, is a false peace; for there is no reconciliation, justification, or sanctification, but thro' him: and by despising and neglecting this Redeemer, we shall certainly be brought *into desolation, as in a moment*, and be overtaken with that everlasting sorrow, tribulation, and anguish, our guilt and iniquity naturally expose us to, which no sorrow here can give us a compleat idea of. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, provoked by our ingratitude and rebellion against him: in order to avoid this, we must put our trust in Christ, commit our souls into his hands, who is the only refuge from that impending storm, that will, in the great day, break in upon impenitent, Christless sinners, and sweep them away
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from the judgment seat, and sink their whole persons into the abyſs of eternal miſery: oh! how neceſſary, how valuable, is an intereſt in the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*? and of what infinite concern is it to every ſinner that has a ſoul to be ſaved, that he has a part and lot in Chriſt? ſince all peace is through him, and without a participation of that peace, both as it regards our pardon, and ſanctification, we cannot *ſee God*, but juſtice muſt, and will take place, in dealing out the exact wages of our ſins, which is nothing ſhort of eternal death.

Thirdly, This ſhould teach Chriſtians (when they are under any temptations either to be ſlothful or anxiously careful) to conſult the promiſes of God, with reſpect to their ſecurity in Chriſt. Theſe promiſes, daily conſider'd and embraced by faith, are a means of ſupporting and quickening the believer in the way of duty: we ſhould not be ſo ſubject to tormenting cares, driven with fears, and unſettled in our frames, duties, and converſation, if we read our bibles more, and were more diligent in applying to thoſe *exceeding great and precious promiſes* therein contained: they are recorded for our inſtruction and conſolation, and in the neglect of them we omit a great privilege and mercy; it is true, they are as a dead letter, as they ſtand objectively in the ſacred word; but in our meditating upon them, we may expect our hearts, under a di-

vine blessing, shall be nourished by them; that the holy spirit of promise will descend and open our understandings, raise our hope and joy, fill us with peace, *seal us up to the day of redemption*, and strengthen our hearts against the temptations that beset us.

Fourthly, How should we adore and bless God for this amazing love, wisdom and grace, in manifesting such compassion towards any of the sons of men! it is wonderful, as we have seen; the contemplation of it should fill us with admiration, thankfulness and praise: surely those that have any reason to hope they are made partakers of this grace, cannot reflect on it, without having their hearts enlarged to sing and publish, with the voice of joy and gladness, *hallelujahs* to him that has bestowed it: cheerfully to unite in singing forth *glory to God in the highest*, since there is *peace on earth, and good will towards men*. When this peace of God operates sensibly in the heart, under the leadings of the Spirit, producing a clear view of our reconciliation with the Father, through the blood of the Son, then praise will set upon our lips, and the believer, thus exercised, cannot but abound in thanksgiving: Christians that have apprehended this love, and felt the power of it on their souls, may reasonably adore and bless God for that grace they cannot comprehend.

Lastly,

Lastly, Let all such who love and trust in Christ, take the comfort of what has been unfolded from this sweet assurance : this should satisfy and rejoice you, O true believer, under every circumstance. Have you been made partakers of this grace? what can you desire more? have you ever had your heart exercised with faith, embracing the attonement? have you been enabled to mourn over your abominable sins at the cross of Christ, and felt peace in your conscience through the blood of this Redeemer? has the consideration of this love of God and Christ, in which your soul has rested itself, (as directed by the declarations and promises of the Gospel) engaged your affections to Christ and made you sincerely ashamed, afraid of, and averse to every sin? fear not, this is the peace of God, it is sure and everlasting; he that has spoke peace, will speak peace; the work begun shall be carried on: though you may be in darkness and trouble, hurried under temptations, and wretchedly harassed with corruptions, cast your burthen on the Lord, he will never suffer the righteous to be moved; with holy confidence proceed on in your Christian course, knowing your enemies shall not prevail.

In a word, Let us take courage, and not cast away our confidence because we meet with trials and difficulties, and find we are, in ourselves, unequal to them; let us always remember the
 grace

grace of our Lord is, and shall be sufficient for us; and that our security don't depend on ourselves, but on his power; who, being reconciled to us through the death of his Son, encompasses our hearts with his peace and favour, as with a shield; he is the rock and tower of our salvation; and, having bestowed this grace upon us, he will preserve us from all destructive evil, until he has brought us safe to his *everlasting kingdom and glory*.

A N

H Y M N,

Alluding to the foregoing Subject.

I.

*T*O God's exalted name
Our songs of glory raise;
Whose grace doth peace on earth proclaim,
And love to men displays.

II.

Admir'd descent, indeed!
That God should notice take
Of rebel man, and Christ should bleed,
His peace with God to make.

III.

Come view the wondrous scheme,
Ye Angels, and adore;
Come, Saints, let this be all your theme,
That Christ does peace restore.

IV. *This*

IV.

*This peace, by faith embrac'd,
Great peace of soul procures;
Our broken bones thus rightly plac'd,
A joyful frame insures.*

V.

*No wrath, but pleasing smiles
Sits on our Father's face;
By love our souls be reconciles,
And wins us by his grace.*

VI.

*Our minds shall never yield
To Satan's envious bow;
And peace divine shall ever shield
Through all the paths we go.*

VII.

*Nor sin, nor death we fear;
Through grace we shall remain;
Our hearts preserv'd, will persevere,
And glory shall obtain.*

VIII. *Dear*

VIII.

*Dear Lord, thy paths we run,
Nor will we ever cease,
'Till all thy pleasure we have done,
Then enter perfect peace.*

The End of the fourth Part.

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Serious exhortation to continue in prayer.

SHEWING

The unreasonableness of neglecting that great privilege, and important duty :

IN TWO

SERMONS,

FROM

I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God. Job xv. 4.

Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. Psalm cxvi. 2.



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S E R M O N I.

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Serious exhortation to continue in prayer.

I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

PRAYER is an exercise naturally adapted to us, as creatures dependent on him that made and formed us; but is more especially suitable and requisite, as we are creatures subject to those infirmities and miseries, to which human nature is liable, in consequence of our apostacy from God. The fall hath made us utterly unworthy of so great a favour as that of addressing God in our time of need, and has render'd this privilege the more necessary, as it has exposed us to a thousand unnatural calamities and distresses every day: adored be the divine compassion and forbearance, that prayer to God was not immediately and eternally forbidden, upon our provoking rebellion against him, and that, through the riches of his grace, he has opened a way of access for any of the sinful race of men, through
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the mediation and flesh of his dear and only begotten Son.

Fallen man may pray, and prayer is the appointed means for obtaining a participation of what God has promised for our relief under necessities, whether spiritual or temporal; God bestows his benefits in this way, and even a man in his natural state is to be stirred up to this duty, as appears from what *Peter* said to *Simon Magus*, [*Acts* viii. 22.] in which instance we find the former bids the latter to pray, under the character of being in the *gaul of bitterness, and bond of iniquity*; a phrase that very strongly expresses a man in his natural estate, who is held under slavery to his lusts; in which condition *Peter* perceived this deceiver was, upon his proposing to purchase the gift of God with money, and yet exhorts him to prayer. It is therefore an immoral, wicked course, for a man to live without prayer, in whatever state he be.

But more especially ought such who fear God to be frequent in this exercise; such who are enlarged and furnished by the special grace of God for this duty and privilege should not, by any means, live in the omission of it. Indeed, all things considered, it is amazing there should be any occasion to stir up the spiritually minded person to the discharge of it; yet experience shews the necessity of exhorting even true Believers to prayer. This excellent and profitable duty, corrupt nature

ture is very averſe to; there is ſomething in our depraved hearts that makes head againſt it, Satan has various ſubtleties to diſcourage, draw us off from, and ſlacken the beſt of us in this exerciſe; inſomuch, that it is an univerſal complaint, (with too much juſtice) as I believe all obſerving profeſſors of every denomination will allow, that it is exceeding difficult to keep up the ſpirit of prayer in Churches and Families, and among thoſe who in a diſtinguiſhing manner name the name of Chriſt: a melancholly ſymptom on the profeſſors of the preſent day, and what looks very threatening indeed: this duty is a ſoul-humbling, but it is alſo a ſoul-nouriſhing duty; perhaps it is that, in the exerciſe of which, we draw the neareſt to God of any duty or privilege we are admitted to, or are capable of in the preſent ſtate; and the experimental Chriſtian muſt acknowledge, that, when aſſiſted by the divine ſpirit, ſo as to be able to attend upon it with an holy freedom, no employment is ſo delightful; ſtrange then we ſhould be ſo liſtleſs and backward toward it, as is too frequently found; this ſhews great imperfection and weakneſs indeed!

Moreover prayer is of great importance in the Chriſtian life, as it is a means of eaſing our breſts from many anxieties, and obtaining many bleſſings; by this we caſt our burthen on the Lord, and through this we receive, at the hands of our Redeemer, ſuch grace as may enable us to walk

as becomes his Gospel. The Apostle therefore (as we have seen) when stirring up the *Philippians*, in his ivth chapter, to the exercise of moderation and joy, in which the pleasure and vigour, beauty and usefulness of a Christian life consists, directs them in every thing by prayer and supplication to make known their requests unto God, as a means whereby they might be enabled to maintain that spirit and conduct; and concludes with promising *the peace of God which passeth all understanding should keep their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*. That we may, in the exercise of the same duty, obtain the same grace, and, under a profession, bear the honour, and enjoy the pleasures of true religion, and, by persevering to the end, obtain everlasting life, it becomes us to be stirring up each other to prayer; and, with this view, I would a little open and press this short apostolical exhortation, in which prayer is so warmly urged. The foregoing subjects, in this volume, being calculated for the revival of practical godliness, and prayer being the settled means, by the fervent exercise of which we can alone expect to obtain that holy Spirit, whose influences are necessary to our being revived; I thought it very expedient (having this opportunity) to subjoin something in relation to this important duty; the neglect of which is none of the least signs or causes of the great declensions we are under. In the prosecution

cution of this subject, I shall be as brief and as plain as I can. *Pray without ceasing.*

The method in which I propose to open and improve the passage before us, is as follows, *viz.*

- I. To explain and describe the duty exhorted to in the text.
- II. To shew when persons may be said to pray without ceasing, and what the exhortation implies.
- III. Point out how reasonable it is that every individual Christian, and every particular body of professors, should attend to this exhortation.
- IV. Close with some observations by way of improvement.

First, The duty exhorted to, and that is prayer. Prayer is an offering up our desires to God, spreading our wants before him, or making known our requests unto him; this exercise is spiritual, in which we pour forth our souls to God. [*Psalm lxii. 8.*] *Pour out your hearts before him, &c.* If the breathings of the soul are not poured out, it is no prayer, how pompous or long soever the form may be; for, as an experimental writer observes, *lifeless words are no prayers.*

Prayer is so far from consisting in words, that words are not essential to prayer. *Hannab*, the mother of *Samuel*, prayed, and continued for some time praying, in the bitterness of her soul; *Eli* marked her mouth, for her lips moved, but she spake only in her heart, her voice was not heard. * [1 Sam. i. 10, 12, 13.] *Moses*, I apprehend, prayed after this manner in the wilderness; it seems as tho' while he was exhorting the *Israelites* to faith and patience (when in that dreadful dilemma, at the brink of the Red Sea, with their enraged pursuers at their heels) his heart was at prayer, putting up earnest petitions that God would appear for their deliverance. [Exodus xiv. 15.] *And the Lord said unto Moses, wherefore criest thou unto me?* We read not of one word he said to God; but, by the relation, it is not improbable he was employing his voice and mouth in addressing the trembling host; and the *Israelites* seemed to be filled with anger against their Leader, and in no good disposition to unite with him in prayer to God for deliverance; and I submit it, whether the silence of scripture, as to the prayer he put up at that time, is not an indication he prayed in his heart

* *And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now, Hannah, she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.*

only,

only, and without any words pronounced in an articulate way ; for, although the sacred history is very concise, it is usual to record the prayers of eminent Saints on extraordinary occasions, at least to say they prayed or cried, but in this instance we have not the least hint of any such thing: however, nothing is more certain, than that, as the spirit of adoption is given into the hearts of God's children, according to *Gal. iv. 6.* so the prayers put up to God, through the assistance of that spirit, are sometimes confined within the heart. [*Rom. viii. 26.*] *Likewise the spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* In which passage, by the spirit's making intercession for us, is to be understood his enabling us to pray to God for ourselves, which, I think, must be allowed upon considering it in connexion with the foregoing clause. They are our prayers spoken of, that are attended with sighs and groans, which cannot be uttered ; but, being spiritual, (as all other spiritual prayers with, or without words do) entirely depend on the assistance of the divine Spirit, so that he is said to do it for us, which does not destroy our own actual concern in those prayers, any more than God's working in believers *to will and to do of his own good pleasure,* is inconsistent with the believer's working out his *salvation with fear and*
Z 4 *trembling,*

trembling, as the Apostle exhorts, mentioning the former to encourage their diligence in so doing. [2 *Philip*. xii. 13.] So that there are prayers real, hearty, spiritual prayers, under the influence of the Spirit of supplication, put up by the children of God, to their heavenly Father, and not a word express'd; words are therefore not essential to prayers, and indeed there may be much speaking, where there is no praying. This mental prayer I am speaking of, especially such of it as so exercises the soul of a believer, that he cannot utter himself, is unintelligible to carnal, ignorant persons, and even some, who have the form of Godliness, represent it as enthusiasm: the account here given of it cannot be acceptable to such, who, though they call themselves Christians, deny the reality, necessity, and efficacy of the Spirit's influence, to enable the believer to pray aright, as well as to perform every other spiritual duty; but the thing is highly reasonable in itself, clearly held forth in Revelation, and known to the experimental believer; and these sort of prayers, especially, have been exercised, when the newly converted sinner is sorrowing after a godly sort on the view of his sin; when convictions pierce, and the heart flows with repentance; aversions and desires, hopes and fears, so exercise the distress'd mind, and requests so multiply, that the Christian cannot express them; the heart is so intent and full of bitterness, it cannot vent or break

break forth into a description of its petitions, all that can be heard, at most, are sighs and groans.

But it is allowed, that, for the most part, by prayer in scripture exhortations we are to understand, and in our text particularly, the expression of our wants before the Lord with our lips, prayers put up with words; these, if sincere and acceptable to God, will be attended with our heart's desire. [*Rom. x. 1.*] *Brethren, my heart's desire, and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* By which phrase, I apprehend, the Apostle sets forth his sincerity as well as his earnestness, that his heart went along with his lips, when he formally and externally prayed for the salvation of the *Jews*. Every serious godly person is watchful about this matter, and in some instances, upon obtaining the testimony of his conscience, humbly pleads it before the Lord. [*Psal. xvii. 1.*] *Hear the right, O Lord! attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.* The believer can distinguish betwixt his voice and his prayer, when he makes use of his voice. [*Psal. lxiv. 1.*] *Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer;* the *Psalmist*, as in many other instances, with his voice made supplication; but he appeals, as it were, in this petition to God, that this his cry was not a mere sound, that, as it was not a low feeble prayer, since his voice was extended, which denotes his earnestness, so it was
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not merely his voice, but that he pleaded for what his soul really longed after.

Prayer, in this sense, is either private or publick, it is to be exercised in the closet, in the family, and in the church. In the closet [*Matt. vi. 6.*] *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, &c.* All secret prayer is not mental; but when the believer is about to express, in words, his wants to his heavenly Father, he frequently enters his closet, and spreads his case before him in private; it becomes us sometimes to withdraw into a solitary and retired place, there to pour out our requests to God; and it is usual, when persons begin first to pray, in a spiritual manner, for them to betake themselves to this, and to be daily exercising themselves thus in private, as they have opportunity, except they go backwards in spiritual things. It has been justly observed, that the beginnings of earnest concern about those things which belong to our peace, and the salvation of our souls, are first discovered in a desire after, and diligent exercise of private prayer; so an indifferency to drawing nigh to God in private, is that by which our declensions in spiritual things is soonest discerned; and is it not to be feared that, upon examination by this rule, many will have cause to blush at their declensions, since publick prayer is so little practised? and for the most part persons leave off
earnest

earnest and frequent prayer in their closets, before they neglect it in their families, or in the churches to which they belong: this observation leads me to take notice of another season or manner in which Christians ought to be found in the exercise of prayer, *viz.*

In the family; this is the duty of all parents, masters, and heads of houses, but shamefully neglected by a multitude of persons in the present day; many professors are gone too far into the vain customs of their worldly neighbours to practice this orderly attendance on family prayer; this duty is not consistent with late visits, or repeated and unnecessary meetings at publick houses, frequent and long absence from the families under our care, and other indulgences, too common with many who would think themselves injur'd to be set below the best of Christians for piety and godliness. But these things ought not to be, they are the bane of Family worship, the neglect of which is a great hindrance to the flourishing of true religion; by this means, youth are corrupted, and many other evils ensue, that are directly opposite to the increase of true godliness in the midst of us. I am aware, a serious exhortation to this is far from being acceptable, where persons have never practised it, or have, through some temptation, given into the neglect of it for any considerable time; of both these sorts there is reason to be jealous, there are not a few members
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of Churches, and such whom we hope in charity, by other symptoms, have received the grace of God in truth ; but let such know that the omission of this duty in them is highly ungrateful to their God, and disgraceful to themselves : I wish such would consider that as the neglect of family prayer provokes the most High, so it often becomes the occasion of sorrow to God's own people. When the Prophet *Jeremiah* was pleading with the Lord to remove his afflicting hand from his people, and reckon with their proud adversaries, he takes notice of this, among other things, that they were a people that knew him not, and families that called not upon his name. [*Jerem. x. 25.*] Some have thought, that servant of the Lord spoke, here, in the spirit of prophecy, concerning the destruction that would come on the *heathen* who had so insulted and injured *Israel*, when God gave them into their hands to be chastized for their sins ; others, take it as a petition : but, let it be considered in either light, the description, I think, carries in it a sharp reproof to those families that live without prayer : the scope of the prophet seems to make it necessary we should understand all that he mentions concerning the heathen, as a complaint against them ; and therefore, when he says, *pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name,* it must imply that as it
favours

favours of great ignorance, so it is highly provoking to God, for families to live without calling upon his name; for, without admitting this, the force of the argument in that text is lost. Now, if it was one instance of provocation in the heathens that their families called not on the name of the Lord, can we reasonably suppose God is less displeased at those families, who, though they enjoy revelation, and some, if not all the members of them profess to have tasted his special grace, yet live without calling upon God, like these ignorant *heathens*? Against prayerless families, the very idolaters themselves will rise up in judgment, who have their household Gods to whom they pay their superstitious devotion; for they are not charged with not praying, or with not performing worship in their families, but with not making the true God the object of their addresses and adoration. The light of nature seems to teach, that every house ought to be a temple to the God we worship; and that in our own houses and families apart, as well as in conjunction with other families in the house of God, we ought to pay our devotion, and such Christians who neglect or despise it, in my opinion, stand condemned by these heathens, who made conscience of praying in their families, although, through blindness, they knew not God, and gave that honour to a stock, which was due to him alone. Sure every man's reason must tell him

him, if God has erected a Throne of grace, to which we may come to obtain mercy in time of need, and there are necessities peculiar to families considered as such, it becomes Christians to wait at this footstool in the character of families; that such a Throne is erected, and that there are such necessities, I believe none will deny: the admitting of it, in those that neglect family worship, is to admit an evidence against themselves, as being guilty of a foolish and sinful omission. The pious *Israelites* not only waited on God in the temple, associating there for prayer, but had a service for God in their dwellings, or separate habitations, which he delighted in, although he seems to express his greater regard to the more publick assemblies, as being more adapted to spread forth his manifestative glory. [*Psalm lxxxvii 2.*] *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.* This passage points out to us, that the *Israelites* assembled before the Lord in their separate dwellings apart, and the comparison made use of, evidently supposes that this more private, social worship was acceptable to God, though he preferred the general assembly: but such who content themselves without, and are ready to cavil against, family worship, because they have not courage or humility to attend so reasonable a service, I think, are deserving of reproof rather than reasoning, for it is an unjustifiable piece of ignorance, considering the

the advantages we enjoy ; nor can any thing be more inconsistent and absurd, than for a family, whose head and members, or some of them at least, pretend to have received the spirit of light and grace, to be a prayerless family. Among many other causes of the absence of family duty in the houses of professors, it is observable, the omission of it upon first setting out is none of the least, which I mention for the caution of young persons, who have not yet been called to the care of a family, that, by entering upon this duty with their charge, they may avoid the temptation of living in the neglect of it ever afterwards ; and to this I would take leave to subjoin my advice, that, if upon such a beginning there is but one person besides themselves, they would not give place one night : I am well assured, such who are careful thus to begin with God, will find their account in it as to temporal or spiritual things, or both.

We find many, who live in the omission of this duty, lamenting they began in the neglect of it at first, and now they cannot find courage to introduce it ; hence they live self-condemned, under a conviction of their evil, enslaved to a servile fear, even of their own children and servants, and are tempted rather to continue in this sin, than undergo the reflections of their past conduct, which taking up this duty in their family may possibly occasion, or than encounter with many other

other difficulties that attend the introduction of it. But while such cannot find courage to perform their duty, who have thus, thro' carelessness, been betrayed into the neglect of it from the first, is it not strange that any that began with prayer, should find hardiness enough to leave it off? Indeed it is much to be wondered at, that all prayerless families, whether this duty was ever practised in them or no, do not find their hearts fail them, when they reflect on their unreasonable and shameful neglect: how can any particular society, any more than any individual person, expect a blessing from God without prayer, the settled means of receiving every blessing from his hands? What God said to the house of *Israel* in general, after a promise of many blessings, he says to every particular house in *Israel*, with regard to all those promises given for their encouragement; viz. *I will be sought unto for these things.* [*Ezek. xxxvi. 37.*] Sure we are not to live together in the form or character of families, any more than in any other form, as *without God in the world.* Thus I hope, it appears it is one branch of the believers incumbent duty, to pray in his family.

Moreover, prayer is to be exercised in the church, or publick assemblies of God's children; the church is God's house, and his house is *an house of prayer*; publick prayers of this sort seem principally intended in the text. The Epistle is directed to these Saints in a collective capacity;
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it is, doubtless, applicable to every individual person and separate family among them; but particularly regards their united prayers, as a church, or body of professors; such meetings of prayer, church members have always had; thus we read in *Acts* xii. 5. *prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him*; but this is an indisputable point, that much of the business of churches, when assembled, is to pray; by this professing Christians are to strive for their minister, the faith of the gospel, and through this they may expect, under a divine blessing, to edify and build up one another in their most holy faith. [*Rom.* xv. 30. *Jude* xx. &c. compared.]

This is the duty exhorted to in our text, *Prayer*, a spiritual exercise in which we breath out our souls to God, this is sometimes confined within our hearts, but frequently our wants are express'd with our lips; a vocal, articulate prayer is here intended, which is the duty of every man, and what every true believer should be found in the practice of, in his closet, in his family, and in the church of God; all which is included, but the Apostle especially eyes the united supplication of the Saints. Next follows, the manner in which this duty is to be performed, *viz.* without ceasing; which leads me to the second thing proposed.

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Secondly,

Secondly, To shew when persons may be said to pray without ceasing, and what this exhortation implies. The renewed heart is a praying heart, in the soul of a believer, there are continual ejaculations under every motion, when in a right frame; if we consider it of mental prayer, this is, in the highest sense, strictly the temper of renewed souls in the exercise of grace, whose hearts, being exercised with cares and fears, wants and desires, are continually lifting up themselves to the Lord; in this sense the believer may say, mine eyes are ever up to the Lord: the soul in which the spirit of prayer dwells, is a praying soul. But we are treating of prayer as an external duty, or as performed by external symptoms, such as voice, gesture, &c. our enquiry is, therefore, when persons may be said to be thus engaged without ceasing. Now this cannot be understood of persons being always employed formally in this exercise, this would be very absurd, and destructive of every other duty of a spiritual kind, and cut the very sinews of morality; such are strangely deluded, who, under a pretence of being in the exercise of prayer night and day, neglect the obligations of civil and religious life. The expression does not necessarily imply spending the whole of our time in the service mentioned; to do a thing without ceasing, is for the most part, to be taken in a limited

mitted and qualified sense. Thus we read [*Luke ii. 37.*] *Anna, the prophetess, a widow, departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers, night and day.* This instance may be presented as an example of praying without ceasing, in as strict and positive a sense as any, yet it appears, from the circumstances of the context, she was not literally and properly in that part of the temple where divine worship was wont to be performed, and prayers are said to be put up night and day; for we are told that at the instant *Simeon* had made his declaration, she came in and added her praises, &c. verse 38. *And she coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*

To pray without ceasing, I apprehend, regards the times or manner of praying, more especially the former.

First, The times, which are either ordinary or extraordinary.

First, It may carry in it the not omitting the ordinary stated seasons appointed for prayer, and that, either private or publick; nothing can be plainer than that the Saints of old had their set seasons for private prayer; thus *Daniel* prayed three times a day, [*Daniel vi. 10.*] so did *David*, and 'tis highly probable, both these holy men employed the same parts of the day in this work; the latter gives us to know, his times were in the

morning, at noon, and at even; [*Pſalm* lv. 17.] and I think it no groundleſs conjecture, that this was the practice of moſt believers eminent for prayer under the former diſpenſation. The *Jews* had their appointed hours of prayer in the Temple, viz. at the third, ſixth and ninth hour; i. e. at nine o'clock in the morning, twelve at noon, and three in the afternoon. Theſe hours, precisely, are not binding on us; nevertheless ſet times the primitive Chriſtians had; when *Paul* was at *Philippi* he went to a place where prayer was wont to be made; the diſciples met together ſtatedly, for prayer, as well as other ſpiritual ſervice, on the firſt day of the week: after the firſt ſettling of Chriſtianity, perſons crept in, who by multiplying days and ſeaſons of prayer, and impoſing them as neceſſary, made them burthenſome, as all impoſitions are, and indeed they ſeem quite contrary to the genius of the Goſpel; we are not to be ſuperſtitiously obſervant of particular ſeaſons, under the preſent diſpenſation, but are left to our liberty; yet ſome ſtated opportunities agreed upon, as it ſuits the people uniting in the ſervice of God, are neceſſary, or we ſhall be in danger of uſing that liberty as *an occaſion for the fleſh*, by a total neglect of our duty. The ſame may be obſerved with reſpect to private prayer; if perſons fix on no ſet times, is it not found by experience, that one excuſe or another will be perpetually intruding itſelf, to prevent our praying at all?

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all? these seasons must be left to persons discretion, and sometimes intervening circumstances may make it necessary to yield such times as are fix'd, in which cases I think the conscience should not be distress'd; but we should take heed our sloth and humour is not subtilly gratified under a pretence of necessity. If we would keep ourselves *watching unto prayer*, we must be faithful to our secret engagements between God and our own souls, otherwise we may insensibly be led into a snare, and gradually decline, till we become prayerless persons.

It is indeed to be lamented, that our weak minds, through the prevailings of corrupt nature, are prone to formality, and take occasion, from these set opportunities, to fall into such a frame; but, in the present state, in every thing we are apt or liable to be drawn aside, the most needful appointments may be abused, and it is good for us to remember our frailty that we may be on our guard. Notwithstanding this is the case, that, if we are not watchful over our spirits, we are in danger of formality, through an attendance on stated seasons, yet such seasons are proper for the reason abovementioned, as might be shewn more at large, were it suitable to the intended limits of this discourse.

To pray without ceasing, is to keep constant, as permitted, to those seasons we have solemnly set apart, without which we are trifling with God

and deceiving ourselves ; we should not neglect such seasons of prayer, but diligently attend these appointments, whether in the closet, the family, or the church, in every instance we are able ; too many professors cease in this sense, but of that hereafter.

Again, this may regard extraordinary opportunities, or occasional seasons ; besides our daily wants, and the mercies we receive in the general course of divine providence, there are remarkable dispensations that call for our humbling ourselves before the Lord in this duty, and for applying to his footstool for wisdom and a blessing ; under every peculiar change and trial we have need to go to prayer, and the Christian that walks close with God finds many occasions of this sort ; he cannot set about any important concern in life, without laying it before the throne, asking leave about it, direction in it, and a blessing upon it ; this causes him to go upon his knees frequently, when it is not the stated hour of prayer ; he will acknowledge the Lord in all his ways, that he may direct his paths : to pray without ceasing takes in continuing to seek the Lord in every thing ; never to set about any one remarkable affair in life, but first to enquire of him ; and were this more seriously attended to, it would not be easy for Satan to prevail on us to set about, or to continue in what is unlawful and inexpedient ; and some professors would bring more honour to
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Christ in their conversation and transactions in life, under the character of his followers, than they now do in the neglect of this duty. If we were to do nothing but what we can, on serious reflection, ask God direction about, and his blessing on, we should seldom do amiss.

Moreover, to pray without ceasing may include the manner of praying, and point out the fervour with which we should wrestle at God's throne; we ought to be importunate as well as constant; then it answers to what is said [*Acts* ii. 42.] the disciples continued stedfastly in prayers, a being instant in prayer, as it is expressed *Rom.* xii. 12. Thus it is said in the fore-mentioned *Acts* xii. 5. *prayer was made without ceasing* for Peter of the church; *i. e.* instant, earnest prayer was made for him; the members of the church were exceeding earnest and importunate in their prayers on his account; the word carries in it a stretching out the heart as it were. Such are the prayers of God's people when duly affected, and under the gales of the the divine spirit. *The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much*, says the Apostle James [chap. v. 16.] Diligence and earnestness is hereby express'd, an increasing in our boldness more and more, a being swift and zealous in the discharge of this duty; there are some that do in a measure give out, or decline in this duty, that have not entirely left it off; the former is often a

360 *A serious exhortation, &c.* Serm. I.
forerunner of the latter; therefore beware, O believer, and watch against temptations to coming late into the house of prayer, being backward to engage in it when you come there, or being contented with a careless performance of it in a cold, lifeless manner, for these are no good symptoms; giving way to these things may have an unhappy influence on your soul; quickly, when trouble overtakes you, you may find the Spirit suspend his gracious assistance once slighted, so that you shall find yourself that you cannot speak, or breathe forth your soul to God.

Thus to pray without ceasing, may regard the seasons and manner of prayer, it implies constancy, diligence and fervour, and stands opposed to negligence and sloth in this duty.

We should now have proceeded to the second branch of this head, *viz.* to observe what this exhortation implies; but of this, and the other branches proposed, we shall treat in the ensuing discourse:

The End of the first Sermon.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

A

Serious exhortation to prayer.

I T H E S S A L O N I A N S V. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

HAVING attempted an explanation of the duty exhorted to in the text, and shewn that prayer is a spiritual exercise in which we breath out our souls to God, either by secret ejaculations in the heart, or with words in an articulate way, and having pointed out the particular intention of the Apostle, who seems here principally to regard the united supplication of the Saints, we came to the second general head proposed, *viz.* To shew when persons may be said to pray without ceasing, and what the exhortation to this practice implies: And under this head it has already been observed, that the sense of this phrase seems to take in a regard to the seasons and manner of prayer, implying a constancy, diligence, and fervour in this duty. We therefore

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therefore now proceed to the other branch of this
general head, *viz.* to take notice of what the
exhortation to this practice implies.

In general, I think it evidently shews that some
persons cease to pray, and that we are liable to
temptations to cease, slacken in, or leave off
prayer. There are some who pray formally for
a while, and on some offence leave off; hence
Job [xxvii. 10.] speaking of the hypocrite
says, *will he always call upon God?* These persons
pray for a time, and on some particular occasions
cry, but their hearts not being right with God,
they soon lay it aside, neglect their duty through
unbelief, go away complaining, it may be, a-
gainst God, saying wherefore have we afflicted
ourselves and no knowledge is taken of us? or
why should we wait any longer? And believers
themselves are often under temptations of omitting,
neglecting, and growing cold and indifferent to
this exercise. I hope it appears, Christian, from
what has been said, and from this exhortation,
that it is of importance for us to pray without
ceasing; *i. e.* without intermission, fainting or
leaving off. That Professors are liable to cease,
in a degree more or less, is so obvious from the
words, as well as from sorrowful experience,
that I mention this plain observation purely for
the sake of an opportunity of exposing two or
three common snares: in which Believers are liable
to be overtaken and betray'd into carelessness and a
neglect

neglect of prayer; and accordingly I shall point out some seasons in which the Christian is tempted to omit it.

First, Our own infirmities often become an occasion to ensnare us into a neglect of this duty; the weakness that attends us in the discharge of prayer, is frequently that by which we are tempted to leave it off: Christians are tempted to cease praying, when they find themselves contracted, and have not the gift of utterance that some have, when they cannot express themselves in the manner some do, or when they are not favoured with the liberty they formerly experienced themselves, as appears from the complaints of many when reproach'd for their manifest omission of prayer, and exhorted to the exercise of it: on such like accounts as these, the enemy is frequently enticing the Christian to cease prayer, nor is the vanity of our own minds a little concerned in some of these excuses.

As to our not being in good frames, it is to be considered, nothing is more uncertain than these, and when any uncomfortable alteration is found, nothing can be more foolish than to slacken our diligence, since this is the way to grow worse and worse, and Satan well knows, if he can persuade persons to leave off praying, the heart is very hardly brought to that duty again; therefore be not ignorant of his devices; if you can pray *in* a good frame, pray *for* a good frame:
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are we on the decline in our spiritual vigour, and shall we decline the duty in which we may expect reviving grace? sure this is foolish and absurd! a spirit for prayer is obtained through prayer, therefore to leave off prayer, because we are dull and heavy in prayer, is most irrational, and inconsistent with a real concern for this unsuitable temper, or a hearty trust in the promise of God, who has assured his spirit to them who ask him.

As to an apprehension of the meanness of our gifts, it is to be feared this objection does not always flow from that spirit of humility which at first view we are ready to apprehend: if any are influenced by such considerations to neglect prayer, I beseech them to consider the folly of it: it is granted, liberty of speech is very agreeable, and a door of utterance may be wrestled for with due submission; but we are to consider God is sovereign in the dispensation of his gifts, and discovers this sovereignty in the distribution of them to the objects of his special grace; God has some wise and gracious end, O believer, if he bestows but one talent on you, while he thinks fit to put another in trust with ten, and give him a much larger gift in prayer: possibly it may be to hide pride from you, and excuse me if I say, it is not unlikely but that this cursed root of bitterness has no small concern in causing you thus easily to comply with a temptation to leave prayer on such an account:
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it is too often the case with professors, not only to refuse to pray because they have been hurried and interrupted once or twice, or have not found liberty as formerly, but because they cannot in their own apprehension, or the opinion of others, pray so well as some. This is the occasion of many church members and others not uniting their voices in prayer with their Christian brethren; but it is a shameful excuse, and favours of no good spirit; it argues no great degree of humility, not to be willing to open our mouths to God in that degree and measure of gift he has bestowed upon us, because we think he has not given us so large or a larger portion than others; reflect and blush, Reader, if you are conscious of such a frame; I am sure when we despise or neglect a little of God's gift, we do not deserve, nor indeed are we like to obtain more. This is unbecoming the wisdom of a Christian, for words are not prayers you see, they are not essential to prayers: we find there are spiritual prayers that cannot, are too great to be uttered; and will you measure out the goodness and greatness of your prayers by your language and expressions: besides, God sees your heart, is intimately acquainted with your secret desire; we notify our requests to him not for information, but obedience sake. From these, and many other things that might be mentioned, it appears that this is a cavil and a stratagem of the *old serpent*, who endeavours

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to take the advantage of our ignorance and pride to make us leave off praying, as though it were to no valuable purpose, because we cannot express ourselves so largely, or with such copious, fluent language, or continue so long as some others: such like excuses a believer ought to be ashamed of.

Secondly, Another season in which we are tempted to cease prayer, is, when God seems to delay an answer; we are poor impatient, weak creatures, are presently weary of crying to the Lord, and ready to say, if we are not immediately supplied, *why should we wait for the Lord any longer?* When any are under this temptation, they should consider the Apostle *Paul*, who, when tried with a grievous affliction, we find besought the Lord *thrice*, which signifies his repeated earnest cries, a certain number, I apprehend, being put for an uncertain, or at least it shews he continued supplicating till Christ vouchsafed an answer; in which he is to be imitated by us. But we are prone to the contrary, and the circumstance of seeming delay causes us to faint and give out; hence our blessed Lord *spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*; [*Luke xviii. 1.*] then follows the parable, representing how apt we are to faint, if not speedily answer'd in our request, and in which our disposition through unbelief (whereby our hearts are often divested of patience and courage)

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is reprov'd, and the folly of it sufficiently set forth.

When we repeat our cry, and still remain under affliction and darkness, we think God shutteth out our prayers; and Satan is ready to suggest our prayers are fruitless, and therefore needless, that these our cries are, and shall be all in vain; but herein he deceives us to our prejudice: cries indeed are in vain to the devil, and all his fellow-rebels, who were cast down from heaven, and bound in chains of justice; fallen creatures, for whom the offended and sin-hating God never provided a Redeemer, may lie down in despair; but shall such devices entice us to omit prayer, to whom God has given his Son, and who have the blood of Christ to insure our acceptance? God forbid!

Thirdly, We are sometimes tempted to leave off praying, when we have obtained the favour we cried for; astonishing instance of depravity indeed! we may justly humble ourselves in the sight of God, and blush to consider there is so much baseness attends us, that we are liable to such ingratitude; but so it is sometimes, facts are stubborn things, experience verifies this sad truth; sometimes those we would hope well of, lift up their hands in adversity, but in prosperity let them down again; amazing vanity, as though there were no snares or difficulties attending prosperity; such are dangerously mistaken,
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for, as I shall presently be led to observe, there is no season in which there is not an occasion for prayer: the tempter makes our ease and tranquillity a handle to cause us to cease prayer; this is frequently the case in private; and how often is it seen in churches, when God removes, an under shepherd, lessens the numbers of a people by death, or other providences, or withholds the wonted success on his ordinances in the midst of them; they that remain, if not greatly stupified, meet together, and cry earnestly to the Lord; but when he turns his dispensation, sends them a pastor they delight in, shines afresh upon their community, and gives forth repeated instances of his presence and power among them, in remarkable edification and conversion; I say, when they are thus revived and multiplied, it is too often seen, that some, who were thus forward, grow indifferent, and decline prayer, and perhaps it is a difficult matter to keep up any seasons of prayer in that community; nay, some professors have been so far sunk, as not to be ashamed of owning, they think there is no occasion to pray, at least so constantly as when in declining circumstances. This shews a declined frame indeed; it looks as though such persons longed for an excuse not to pray; it is very ungrateful to argue from the goodness of God in hearing our prayers to the neglect of them; especially as prayer is one appointed means of acknowledging the
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the favours bestowed upon us, for we are to *make known our requests to God by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving.* David was of another mind, when, being filled with love to God, he declares, he would call on him as long as he lived, *or daily*, because he had heard the voice of his supplication, and granted the thing he cried for; [*Psalms* clxvi. and beginning.] there is but little sign of a blessing with the mercies a person or a people receive, when the affections are not raised to God, and there is an indifferency about waiting upon him at the throne of grace: our text is full against such folly and ingratitude, for it exhorts us to *pray without ceasing*; there is no just excuse for leaving off prayer, but abundant cause to continue in it to the end of life. This brings me to the next general division.

Thirdly, To point out how reasonable it is, that every individual Christian, and every particular collective body in Christ should attend to this exhortation, or shew why it becomes them to pray without ceasing; some reasons for which are as follows.

First, The *occasion* for prayer never ceases; this was hinted before; nor is there any occasion to spend much time in the proof of it to any considerate person; we are necessitous in every state and condition. This life is sentenced to sorrow for sin; nor is there any age, station, or advantages in life, that will lift a person above

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affliction, temptation, and distress of one kind
and another. A time of need is a time for
prayer; there is no part of time, under any cir-
cumstances, exempt from danger or difficulty,
we therefore always want protection and assist-
ance; our condition may alter, and troubles may
shift, but trouble never ceases in this state;
since *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*;
[Job v. 7.] When tempted to neglect prayer, let
us consider, is there nothing we want for our-
selves or others? till then, it is unreasonable to
neglect this duty: we shall find every alteration
brings its snare; difficulties of different persons,
or of the same person under different dispensa-
tions, may not be exactly of the same kind; but
difficulties attend every situation, and though
some may have fewer, or less comparatively, yet
the fewest and least will be too many and too great
for any of us, if left to ourselves. In the present
day, professors are little in prayer, and some
seem to think it of little importance, because we,
through indulgent providence, enjoy outward
ease and liberty; but has not long ease and unin-
terrupted liberty always been ensnaring? has
not every age, under such circumstances, pro-
duced instances of carnality which obstruct the
vigour and fruitfulness of the Christian life? and
will any serious observer of the present frame and
conduct of such who name Christ, say we are
free from the melancholly consequences of such a
spirit?

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spirit? It is too plain, though we have no call for prayer because of persecution from the civil powers, but have reason to bless God, and be thankful and obedient to them for our freedom, yet the declensions, corruption, error, and divisions of professors call loud for visiting the throne of grace. If our liberties are not in danger, our religion is; and I think it must be allowed, of the two, it is better to lose the former than the latter. They that are concerned for the faith of the Gospel, have reason to be instant in their duty striving together for it. Thus in every condition, whether considered in an individual or collective capacity, we are exposed, and in necessity, and therefore we ought always to pray; for until want ceases, it is absurd and foolish to cease prayer.

Secondly, The necessity for prayer never ceases: prayer is not merely a point of prudence, but an indispensable duty; not only what we have occasion for as a *likely* way, but what there is a necessity for as the *only* way: God has appointed this way, nor shall we receive any true blessing without asking for it; we must come to the throne of grace if we would *obtain mercy* and find help in a *time of need*: he that asks shall find what God promises to his people, that he will be sought unto for by them; *for these things will I be enquired of by the house of Israel.* This is the only way of relief, all the promises are made to him that seeks; we

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cannot reasonably, according to the representation of God's word, expect relief or succour, but by humbly notifying our requests to him; God waits to be gracious, but he will be waited on for the exhibition of his grace: this is a strong argument for constant prayer, as we are always in want; this is the only way in which we can expect supplies from our heavenly Father. It is highly reasonable therefore we should pray without ceasing.

Thirdly, The liberty of praying never ceases, therefore gratitude binds us to attend this advice. This is a sweet and comfortable consideration; so much of the kindness, wisdom, and grace of our heavenly Father appears, in consecrating a new and living way, and granting free liberty, that, upon serious meditation, it is scarcely possible to withstand the influence it has to engage us to this; a reflection on this must quicken to prayer, if there is any ingenuity or love to God prevailing in the mind; God has opened a free and eternal way of access through Christ's flesh; Christ having shed his blood and made peace with God, is gone to heaven as our advocate; we have seen him an high priest passed into the heavens, therefore we may come with the greatest freedom and boldness. [*Heb.* iv. 16.] The very exhortation itself implies this constant liberty, allowing the writer to be under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; for an exhortation to constant prayer,

prayer, under the unerring dictates of this divine person, necessarily contains an assurance of constant liberty to pray; for it would not consist with goodness and wisdom to indite an exhortation to pray without ceasing, if at any time this liberty ceased. We may be straightened in ourselves, our faith and graces may be low, and our minds contracted, we may be out of a praying frame, but we are not confined by God's word, nor is he backward to listen, for, as his eyes are on the righteous to watch over and defend them, so his ears are open to their cries. The prayer of the upright is his delight; such is his rich grace through Christ, he bids us (as we have seen) in every thing, by prayer and supplication make known our requests to him. [Phil. iv. 6.] Call upon me in the day of trouble, without exception, is the encouraging invitation; here is no room for unbelief, to put in a cavil, and say, it was but yesterday, or the last hour, I waited on God for relief, and obtained favour at his hands, nor to question about the propriety of asking under this or the other trouble, but all seasons are included; we may pray always, *with all prayer*; no time, no circumstance forbids our approach to the footstool. Night and day as frequently as our troubles revolve, even though we have brought ourselves into distress thro' our own folly, (for he upbraideth not, with whom we have to do) there is always leave to pour out our souls before him,

through his Son: in a word, we are always welcome, which is a strong reason why we should always pray, or *pray without ceasing*.

Fourthly, The *success* of prayer never ceases; the believer always speeds, he is always answered, never prays in vain; this assertion may possibly startle some weak, fearful Christians at first view; some poor soul may be ready to doubt, and say, by way of complaint, in answer hereto, “ I have
 “ often prayed to God and repeated my request
 “ times without number, but still I continue
 “ under affliction and darkness; I have besought
 “ the Lord again and again, and yet I am
 “ sorely exercised; my troubles are enlarged, my
 “ temptations surround me, I have no sensible,
 “ visible answer; can such prayers succeed?
 “ Sure this is but a bad symptom upon me; if
 “ this is the case, if the prayers of the faithful
 “ always prosper and are heard, I fear I am no
 “ believer.” To such a jealous, trembling mind, it may be replied in the affirmative, yes, your prayers under all these supposed circumstances may succeed, your tormenting fears are for want of exercising a spiritual discernment and patience, your rule of judgment is not good; it favours of ignorance, and too hasty a spirit, to conclude thus against yourself on account of these dark scenes; consider, we are not to judge of the success of our prayers by particular outward dispensations: when I say prayer never ceases to
 succeed,

succeed, I do not mean the believer shall have every thing immediately he asks for, at the time, and in the form he requests it : we, thro' ignorance, or it may be thro' the predominancy of some irregular passion, ask amiss, and God denies in mercy ; he gave murmuring *Israel* their request, but sent leanness into their soul. These seeming delays do not lay our success in prayer on any just suspicion : God expects his people should receive blessings from his hand in a way of waiting and believing, but if we were always immediately to be put in possession of the very thing we prayed for, even when we petition for what is agreeable to the will of God, there would be no place for faith and hope ; but, upon having discharged this duty, these graces are to be exercised ; *in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.* [*Psalm* v. 3.] This phrase, *looking up*, as applied to the exercise of the soul, under these circumstances, seems to be expressive of the believer's waiting in expectation of a blessing, according to the divine promise ; some distance between asking and receiving is the usual method of dispensing the mercies God bestows ; and hereby there is an opportunity for the trial of our patience and hope.

But, if his heavenly Father sees meet to deny the temporal favour pleaded for, it should satisfy the Christian that he has various ways of making abundant amends for the withholding the parti-

cular thing he petitioned for ; he can make that very denial a foundation of a much greater blessing, and *is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.* God often accepteth the person and the prayer, and yet does not immediately grant the thing prayed for. The Apostle assures us [*Heb. v. 7.*] Christ was heard in supplication to his Father, who was able to save him from death, and yet the cup did not pass from him. The affliction, under which *Paul.* so earnestly besought the Lord, was not immediately removed, yet his prayer was heard and answered to his abundant satisfaction and joy: indeed when an assurance of divine love is given, in the room of any temporal favour, the Christian, at least while the sensation of it remains on his heart, does not complain ; but there are many considerations to quiet the minds of believers, where returns of prayers are not so easily discerned, nor such particular manifestations of the divine favour vouchsafed, which it will not suit the brevity proposed in this discourse to mention. *

God knows best at what period, and by what means to convey his relief, and his children, on reflection, hereafter will see a beauty

* The excellent Dr. *Thomas Goodwin* has many pertinent and useful remarks on this head, in a treatise on *Psalm lxxxv. 8.* styled *the return of prayers* ; 1643. which, I think, is worth the perusal of those who are doubtful about God's answering their prayers.

in the seasonableness and aptitude of all his dispensations; for hereby he discovers much wisdom and goodness, and will sooner or later bring a revenue of glory to himself, by raising the affections and thankfulness of those who fear his name, and have been the objects of his special love and care.

However dark the season may be with the true believer, nothing can be plainer from sacred writ, than that the earnest, humble prayer of the faithful is always heard and accepted, and consequently succeeded: the priesthood of Christ revealed for our consolation, insures it, many positive declarations assert it: we are always admitted and received of the Father, not on account of our worthiness, or sincerity, or fervency, but for the sake of him, who, having yielded himself a sacrifice to divine justice, is gone into Heaven with his own blood as an intercessor. He presents the prayers of his people, as well as prays for them; prayers perfumed with the incense of his merits are a sweet savour to God, and of such petitions he will hear and bless the petitioners; our prayers, or prayers put up by us under the assistance of the divine spirit, always avail; though not for our sake, or as our performance, yet as God's ordinance, and presented by this high priest our advocate above. This is abundantly confirmed [*1 Peter* iii. 12.] We are told *the ears of the Lord are open unto our prayers;* what

what is asked in faith, is always asked with submission to the pleasure of God, and with an eye to that covenant which is *ordered in all things*, and a blessing insured under every dispensation; such requests are never denied. [*John* xv. 7.] *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* This is to be understood of a will sanctified and conformed to the will of God; the petitions flowing out of such a mind carry, in their own nature, an entire resignation as to providential dealings: our Lord, who knew his Father's will, left an assurance with his sorrowing disciples on his departure from them, that whatsoever they asked the Father in his name, he would give it. [*John* xvi. 23.] hence the Apostle [*1 John* iii. 22.] speaks with great assurance, saying, *Whatsoever we ask (in Christ's name) we receive of him.* And this point is most clearly set before us in the vth chapter of the same Epistle. 14, 15. *This is the confidence that we have in him, (i. e. the Son of God, or Christ) that if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us, and if we know that he hears us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him.* Thus, you see, we have the rule of our petitions, the medium or foundation of our acceptance, and the certainty of our success, represented together; and a glorious confidence it is, greatly tending to encourage our constant prayer, *pray without ceasing,*
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for God never said to the seed of *Jacob* seek ye me in vain. But once more,

Fifthly and *Lastly*, The many *spiritual advantages* that arise from this duty should animate us to *pray without ceasing*; however, it may please God to deal with us as to the particular affair that occasioned our addressing his throne; the exercise of prayer is much for the health and prosperity of the soul, for the sake of which it becomes us to be much in prayer. Prayer has a most sweet and salutary influence on the mind, no spiritual exercise redounds more to our spiritual profit; several things it promotes that demonstrate its advantageous effects.

First, It has a peculiar and happy tendency to promote humility; it exercises and strengthens every grace, but in an especial manner is it adapted to advance the Christian in this heavenly temper and disposition; some degree of humility is prerequisite to pray, there is no praying without humbling ourselves; hence the wicked in the pride of his heart does not seek God in this manner; but though humility, in a measure, is necessary to spiritual prayer, prayer is a great nourisher of this grace, the measure of it is greatly increased by the exercise of prayer; no duty promotes this excellent and lovely habit more; nothing more humbling than for the soul to draw nigh to a holy God, through the blood of Christ. Preaching the word, hospitality

tality to the Saints in the house of God, and many other acts of piety and devotion, have something in them with which our vain hearts are too apt to take occasion to be elated and lifted up. We have need of great grace, and, it may be, sore exercises to keep down our pride under any distinguishing talents for these good works, or success in the exercise of them; but the more we pray, the more humble we are; some instances may possibly be found of persons priding themselves in their freedom of utterance, their language, and the length of their prayers. They may exceed others in these respects, and be talk'd of, upon which their vain minds may swell, but, it may be, on reflection they will find that when their tongues have been most fluent, and their addresses drawn out to the greatest length, their hearts have been least humbled before God; a plain expression and shorter prayer put up in an assembly of Christians, it may be, had been easier and more profitably joined in by those for whom such an one was the appointed mouth to God. There is such a thing as addressing our fellow-creatures under the pretence of addressing God, which the heart, overtaken with a conceit of its gift, is insensibly led into: it is to be hop'd such instances are very few, but where any have been permitted to fall into such a temptation, they are far from being acceptable to the serious Christian; for, although
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some vain superficial persons may greatly admire and applaud this fine and much speaking before the Almighty with an air of freedom becoming an equal or superior, it is grievous to the humble spiritually minded believer, that comes needy to the throne, and is ready to hide himself under a deep sense of his unworthiness; such an one departs from the house of prayer mourning to find the breathings of his soul so little represented, after he has spent so much time in publick, and attended to an oration that seemed calculated rather to shew the abilities of the spokesman, than the necessities of the supplicants, or the promises of that God, whose grace, through *Christ Jesus*, he depends upon for relief. When such florid orations are made, instead of serious plain petitions suitable to scripture, and the experience of Christians, I think, it discovers the person that delivers them to have little or no gift for prayer at all.

But, to return : however gifts may puff up, that grace, in the exercise of which (under the assistance of the holy Spirit) the Christian really prays, mortifies his pride ; the more we humble ourselves before the Lord in this duty, the more this grace will increase ; true prayer is of an humbling nature, and therefore our proud hearts are backward to it ; it is the most contrary to nature to lie in the dust before God, and, in proportion to
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the carnality of our frames, we are ever making excuses against it; and because it promotes so useful a grace, among other things, the common enemy will industriously use many devices to turn aside such who are resolving to embrace every opportunity for exercising themselves in it.

Again, the constant and earnest exercise of prayer yields peace and composure to the heart; this, in some measure, is the consequence of the former, for as pride disturbs the mind with a jealous, hasty disposition, so humility begets hope, fills the spirit with meekness and patience, and thereby promotes peace and tranquility of soul; besides which, prayer is an heart-easing duty, as it is the method whereby, according to divine appointment, the believer casts his burthen on the Lord, and is relieved from tormenting cares, and in the exercise of which God is graciously pleased to communicate of that peace *which passeth all understanding*, according to the promise in *Philip. iv. 7.*

This duty also quickens our expectation; since God has promised, he that asks shall receive, he will hear at all times; the believer, reflecting on the divine word, can hope with courage when he has prayed; this seemed to be the opinion of the *Psalmist* in the passage now mentioned, *I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

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In fine, it is a noble guard against sin; hence prayer is joined to watching, this spiritual weapon, *all prayer*, is a tried piece of armour; how often have experimental Christians found they should have fallen into temptation, if they had not fell upon their knees? a man that daily and frequently, with a becoming spirit, draws nigh to a holy God in this duty, whereby he maintains a sense of his vileness, the temptations he is under, the righteousness of him with whom he has to do, cannot be easily drawn into deliberate and allowed iniquity; we must examine a little into our hearts before we pray, if we are not uncommonly stupid and irreverent indeed; we cannot exercise this in a social way, either in our own family, the church, or any other collection of fellow-believers to whom we are related, without some harmony and love; going to prayer naturally weakens sin, as it naturally calls for our mortifying our lusts and passions, and is, when performed in any thing of a tolerable right spirit, the occasion of calling ourselves to an account whether we are in suitable temper; hence, families and societies of every kind, the more praying the more loving. People cannot seriously pray, and retain resolutions for indulging their lusts, whether of *the flesh* or of *the mind*. Praying spiritually and sinning wilfully are opposites. It has therefore been an ancient observation of experimental divines, that prayer will make a man

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off sinning, if sin does not make a man leave off praying.

Thus you see the abundant reason there is for attending to the advice of the Apostle, and *pray without ceasing*. We have always need of protection and assistance from God, so that the occasion never ceases; this is the only way promised for our relief, the necessity therefore never ceases, we are always welcome to this throne of grace, nor shall our serious addresses through Christ ever be rejected, but constantly succeed, and there are many spiritual advantages arise to the soul that frequently exercises itself after this manner, particularly as it undoubtedly promotes humility, peace, hope and purity. So that much folly and ingratitude attends the wilful neglect of prayer.

I now close with a few brief reflections.

First, We see the folly and danger of prayerless persons; if it be our duty thus to *pray without ceasing*, and praying seldom, or with indifference, is so unreasonable, what excuse can be made for such who never pray at all? They live a stupid, senseless life indeed; one would think such persons had no natural notions of God, but were altogether brutish and without understanding; the more knowledge such pretend to have, the greater is their guilt in this omission; such despisers of God who neglect the throne of grace, if they repent not, will cry in vain hereafter, when they
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are overtaken in their sins, and *brought into desolation as in a moment*; the ears of mercy will be shut in the day of God's wrath; then he, whose kindness has been trampled upon by such, will laugh at their calamity; and since this is the way in which alone blessings are conveyed through a Redeemer, how miserable are they who live without prayer? They are exposed to the effects of the curse, in every place, and under every circumstance; our prayers do not instate us into the favour of God, but we may be sure he that lives utterly without prayer, lives under the wrath of God, has no communion with God; in short, *lives without God in the world*, is therefore *alienated from the life of God*, and consequently in danger of eternal damnation. I hope, Reader, you are not among this number; if you are, remember your prayers can no more reach heaven out of hell, than your persons can pass from one of these places to the other, which our Lord in a parable has shewn is impossible; [*Luke xvi. 26.*] When such, who never call on God *now*, are once sunk into the pit of destruction, on the verge of which prayerless sinners stand exposed, they will *then* behold praying Saints praising God, and following their perfect spirits in the river of love, which flows at the right hand of their heavenly Father, and out of those living fountains of water to which the Lamb shall lead them, and at the same time find their own scorching tormented

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Spirits hopeless and despairing; such will then lift up their eyes in vain for the least drop of that water to cool their prayerless tongues: Be warned therefore, not to give into, or continue in the omission of this reasonable, necessary, and profitable duty, lest, never opening your mouth to God *now*, you find yourself speechless in the day of judgment; for such who never seek to God in this life, will have nothing to say that will vindicate them, when their guilty souls are arraigned at his awful tribunal.

Secondly, This should teach us to cherish and obey that spirit, through whose assistance alone we can pray or continue to pray aright; the constant aids of the holy spirit are necessary to pray without ceasing; the duty exhorted to in our text is what *Jude* styles *praying in the holy Ghost*, through which believers build up one another in their most holy faith, verse 20. To this agrees *Ephes. vi. 18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit*; by the help of the spirit of God alone, we can pray without ceasing; our infirmities would prevail, and we should faint and decline like *Moses's* arms [*Exodus xvii. 12.*] unless (as *Aaron* and *Hur* supported them) our souls were upheld and invigorated by this free spirit. This spirit must quicken, convince us of our wants, refresh us with promises, and enable us to embrace them by faith, and so give us utterance and courage to wrestle and plead, or
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we shall soon grow weary of lifting up our hands in prayer. We are therefore, as the Apostle exhorts in this same Epistle, to take heed we *quench not the spirit* through wantonness, unbelief, or neglect of duty; and of this duty of prayer especially, for none are more likely to be denied his sensible influence, as a spirit of prayer, than such who allow themselves in the omission of this exercise; remember, if he ceases to blow upon your soul, your soul must cease to breathe itself out to God in prayer: it should be our constant and earnest cry to our heavenly Father, that, as he would not *cast us away from his presence*, so he would not *take his holy spirit from us*.

Thirdly, How useful are those members of a society that have the spirit of prayer; they are valuable heads of families that can pray with those under their roof, since in that capacity we ought to pray without ceasing; let those who slight such a privilege, and are backward to attend family duty, when called to it by their praying superiors, beware, lest they are brought to see their folly in being deprived of such an instrument, or have their lot cast where there is none that have ability or inclination to discharge this duty with them; and this, by the way, may easily be done while the life of the praying master or father is continued; for, considering how many houses there are in which no altar is set up, if you are in a praying family, a change in your situation is very

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likely to carry you where there is no appearance
of the worship of God,

Much to be esteemed are those members of churches that are ready to unite in prayers in the house of God, for this is the means of keeping up prayer in such communities, and without prayer, churches, of all societies, are most shameful and scandalous; whatever form a body of people may have, it seems no church when there are no publick praying members in it. The church is the house of God. [1 *Tim.* iii. 15.] It is written, says our Lord, *my Father's house shall be an house of prayer*; [Matt. xxi. 13.] how unlike a church then are a body of people, among whom, as such, there are no prayers kept up? a prayerless church is like a breathless corps, nor can our heavenly father take delight in such a people, whatever their pretences are; for *the prayer of the upright is his delight*, and churches, of all bodies individual or collective, ought to be praying bodies, and to pray without ceasing; in order to their praying, it is necessary their members should have a spirit of prayer; therefore praying members are valuable members; those that have a place in the church of Christ should covet to excel in prayer, and cry to God for opportunity, capacity, and diligence, that they may be useful this way. It looks promising when God bestows a praying spirit on the members of any society, for praying societies are
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like to be persevering societies; such bodies of Christians God will not fail to own and bless.

Fourthly, This exhortation to pray without ceasing, teaches us to watch against every thing that hinders our praying, as very hurtful and pernicious; it requires great care and circumspection to avoid some things, which, though lawful in a degree, yet, when inordinately pursued, have a slow, but sure influence to draw us off from instant and earnest prayer: many specious pretences are made by Satan, and unbelief, to divert us from this duty; sometimes harmless pleasures, sometimes business: the former may be exercised with moderation, though I question if ever any serious believer omitted a single season of prayer purely for the sake of pleasure, and reflected upon it with any satisfaction; and though business ought diligently to be attended to, if we would honour our profession, yet no worldly business ought to be so closely followed as to hinder our frequent praying; to make a practice of omitting prayer, under a pretence of being industrious, is to trust more to our own industry and care, than to the promise and providence of God; and this is unworthy a true believer: we ought to militate and strive against every thing that we find slackens our heart's desire after prayer, how plausible soever. If it is our duty to pray without ceasing, that must be our temptation that would prevent our continuing in prayer.

To conclude, Have we not great reason to mourn over our declensions in this respect, as a professing people? how is the spirit of prayer departed from us according to all outward appearance? As to secret prayer, every one is to judge and answer for himself; but is it not difficult to discern betwixt the families of such who have separated themselves from the world into church fellowship? it was once easy to discover when we were in a family who profess'd the fear of God by their spiritual conversation and frequent prayers; but few, comparatively, are such desirable tokens now, so trifling for the most part is the former, and so much is the latter neglected. And as to churches, with how much pains are any meetings of prayer kept up in some, and how much occasion to fear they are wholly laid aside in others, that were once eminent for a spirit of prayer in the midst of them. Appointments of prayer, 'tis well known, are some of the most discouraging opportunities to faithful, affectionate ministers, and the few zealous members left in the churches; instead of being helpers of each other's joy by our mutual prayers, do we not hinder and grieve one another by our sad neglect? We are surely ceased, declined, and gone backward in this matter; on this account it may too justly be said our gold is become dim, and our fine gold changed, for some that formerly were ready to prayer, are now backward; let us every one lament it before
God,

God, provoke one another to this exercise, and not flatter ourselves we shall be *fruitful*, while we are *prayerless*. We *were* heretofore in general a praying people, and flourished; we *are* at present too generally a *prayerless* people, and no wonder we wither and decline. Blessed be God there are any praying people left among us; may all such grow bold and increase, and never cease to cry, till God has afresh poured out his spirit of grace and supplication on the house of *Judah*, and the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*; then may we hope to find our God descending upon us as the dew, so shall spiritual *Israel* grow as the lilly; then will our branches spread, our beauty be restored like the olive-tree, and our scent be as *the wine of Lebanon*.

F I N I S

ERRATA.

- Page 52, line 1, affluences, *r* affluence.
59, l. 30, a person and his, *r* persons and their.
72, l. 16, his precious, *r* the precious.
78, l. 16, Redeemer, *r* redeemed.
97, l. 28, or but just, *r* tho' but just.
107, l. 8, *dele* of.
155, l. 23, since this, *r*, for this doctrine.
240, l. 28, *dele* neither.
323, l. 28, *dele* consequently.
360, l. 11, *dele* yourself that.
371, l. 27, *dele* that.
374, l. 11. *dele* often.
377, l. 23, *dele* of.

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